

Selections from The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines, translated by Edward Conze

Reformatted in verse form for ease of reading and recitation

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From Chapter Seven, 1. Hymn to The Perfection of Wisdom

Sariputra: The perfection of wisdom,
 O Lord,
 is the accomplishment
 of the cognition
 of the all-knowing.
 The perfection of wisdom
 is the state of all-knowledge.

The Lord: So it is, Sariputra, as you say.

Sariputra: The perfection of wisdom
 gives light,
 O Lord.
 I pay homage to the perfection of wisdom!

She is worthy of homage.

She is unstained,
 the entire world cannot stain her.

She is a source of light,
 and from everyone in the triple world
 she removes darkness,
 and she leads away
 from the blinding darkness
 caused by the defilements
 and by wrong views.

In her we can find shelter.

Most excellent are her works.

She makes us seek the safety
 of the wings of enlightenment.

She brings light to the blind,
 she brings light so that
 all fear and distress may be forsaken.

She has gained the five eyes,
and she shows the path to all beings.

She herself is an organ of vision.

She disperses the gloom
and darkness of delusion.

She does nothing about all dharmas.

She guides to the path
those who have strayed on to a bad road.

She is identical with all-knowledge.

She never produces any dharma,
because she has forsaken the residues
relating to both kinds of coverings,
those produced by defilement
and those produced by the cognizable.

She does not stop any dharma.
Herself unstopped and unproduced
is the perfection of wisdom.

She is the mother of the Bodhisattvas,
on account of the emptiness of own marks.

As the donor of the jewel
of all the Buddha-dharmas
she brings about the ten powers
(of a Buddha).

She cannot be crushed.

She protects the unprotected,
with the help
of the four grounds of self-confidence.

She is the antidote to birth-and-death.

She has a clear knowledge
of the own-being of all dharmas,
for she does not stray away from it.

The perfection of wisdom of the Buddhas,
the Lords,
sets in motion the wheel of the Dharma.

From Chapter One, 2. The Extinction of Self

Thereupon the Venerable Subhuti,
by the Buddha's might,
said to the Lord:

The Lord has said,
'Make it clear now, Subhuti,
to the Bodhisattvas,
the great beings,
starting from perfect wisdom,
how the Bodhisattvas,
the great beings
go forth into perfect wisdom!'

When one speaks of a 'Bodhisattva,'
what dharma does that word 'Bodhisattva' denote?

I do not O Lord,
see that dharma 'Bodhisattva',
nor a dharma called 'perfect wisdom.'
Since I neither find,
nor apprehend,
nor see a dharma 'Bodhisattva,'
nor a 'perfect wisdom,'
what Bodhisattva shall I instruct
and admonish
in what perfect wisdom?

And yet, O Lord, if,
when this is pointed out,
a Bodhisattva's heart does not become cowed,
nor stolid,
does not despair nor despond,
if he does not turn away or become dejected,
does not tremble,
is not frightened or terrified,
it is just this Bodhisattva,
this great being,
who should be instructed in perfect wisdom.

It is precisely this
 that should be recognized
 as the perfect wisdom of that Bodhisattva,
 as his instruction in perfect wisdom.

When he thus stands firm,
 that is his instruction and admonition.

Moreover, when a Bodhisattva courses in perfect wisdom and develops it,
 he should so train himself
 that he does not pride himself
 on that thought of enlightenment
 [with which he has begun his career].
 That thought is no thought,
 since in its essential original nature
 thought is transparently luminous.

Sariputra: That thought which is no thought,
 is that something which is?

Subhuti: Does there exist,
 or can one apprehend
 in this state of absence of thought
 either a 'there is' or a 'there is not'?

Sariputra: No, not that.

Subhuti: Was it then a suitable question
 when the Venerable Sariputra asked whether that thought
 which is no thought
 is something which is?

Sariputra: What then
 is this state of absence of thought?

Subhuti: It is without modification
 or discrimination.

Sariputra: Well do you expound this, Subhuti,

you whom the Lord has declared
to be the foremost of those
who dwell in Peace.

And for that reason,
because he does not pride himself
on that thought of enlightenment]
should a Bodhisattva be considered
as incapable of turning away
from full enlightenment,
and as one who will never cease
from taking perfect wisdom to heart.

Whether one wants to train
on the level of Disciple,
or Pratyekabuddha,
or Bodhisattva,
- one should listen to this perfection of wisdom,
take it up, bear it in mind,
recite it, study it,
spread it among others,
and in this very perfection of wisdom
should one be trained and exert oneself.

In this very perfection of wisdom
should one
endowed with skill in means,
exert himself,
with the aim of procuring all the dharmas
which constitute a Bodhisattva.

In just this perfection of wisdom
all the dharmas which constitute a Bodhisattva,
and in which he should be trained
and exert
himself,
are indicated in full detail.

He who wants to train for full enlightenment
should also listen, etc.,

to this perfection of wisdom.

One who is endowed with skill in means
should exert himself in just this perfection of wisdom,
with the aim of procuring all the dharmas
which constitute a Buddha.

Subhuti: I who do not find anything to correspond
to the word ‘Bodhisattva,’
or the words ‘perfect wisdom,’
– which Bodhisattva should I then instruct
and admonish in which perfect wisdom?

It would surely be regrettable if I,
unable to find the thing itself,
should merely in words
cause a Bodhisattva to arise
and to pass away.

Moreover, what is thus designated
is not continuous
nor not-continuous,
not discontinuous
or not-discontinuous.
And why?
Because it does not exist.
That is why it is not continuous
nor not-continuous,
not discontinuous,
or not-discontinuous.

A Bodhisattva who does not become afraid
when this deep and perfect wisdom is being taught
should be recognized as not lacking
in perfect wisdom,
as standing at the irreversible stage
of a Bodhisattva,
standing firmly,
in consequence of not taking his stand anywhere.

Moreover,
 a Bodhisattva who courses in perfect wisdom and develops it,
 should not stand in form, etc.
 Because, when he stands in form, etc.,
 he courses in its formative influences,
 and not in perfect wisdom,
 for, while he courses in formative influences,
 he cannot gain perfect wisdom,
 nor exert himself upon it,
 nor fulfill it.

When he does not fulfill perfect wisdom,
 he cannot go forth to all-knowledge,
 so long as he remains one
 who tries to appropriate the essentially elusive.

For in perfect wisdom
 form is not appropriated.
 But the non-appropriation of form, etc.,
 is not form, etc.
 And perfect wisdom also cannot be appropriated.

It is thus that a Bodhisattva
 should course in this perfect wisdom.

This concentrated insight of a Bodhisattva
 is called
 ‘the non-appropriation of all dharmas.’
 It is vast,
 noble,
 unlimited and steady,
 not shared by any of the Disciples
 or Pratyekabuddhas.

The state of all-knowledge itself
 cannot be taken hold of,
 because it cannot be seized through a sign.
 If it could be seized through a sign,
 then Srenika,
 the Wanderer,

would not have gained faith
in this our religion.

Srenika,
the Wanderer,
believed resolutely in this cognition
of the all-knowing,
and as a 'faith-follower',
he entered on a cognition
with a limited scope.

He did not take hold of form, etc.
Nor did he review that cognition
with joyful zest and pleasure.
He viewed it neither as inside form, etc.,
nor as outside,
nor as both inside and outside,
nor as other than form, etc.

In this scripture passage,
Srenika, the Wanderer,
as one who always resolutely believes
in this cognition of the all-knowing,
is called a faith-follower.

He took the true nature of dharmas
as his standard,
and resolutely believed in the signless,
so that he did not take hold of any dharma,
nor apprehend any dharma,
which he could have appropriated
or released.
He did not even care about Nirvana.

This also should be known as a Bodhisattva's perfect wisdom,
that he does not take hold of form, etc.,
and that he does not enter Nirvana midway
before he has realized the ten powers of a Tathagata,
his four grounds of self-confidence,
and the eighteen dharmas

peculiar to a Buddha.

Therefore this too should be known
as a Bodhisattva's perfect wisdom.

Further, a Bodhisattva who courses in perfect wisdom
and develops it,
should consider and meditate on what that perfect wisdom is,
on him who has it,
and on this perfect wisdom as a dharma
which does not exist,
which cannot be apprehended.

When these considerations
do not make him afraid,
then he is to be known as a Bodhisattva
who possesses perfect wisdom.

Sariputra: How can a Bodhisattva
be known as possessing perfect wisdom,
when the very form does not possess the own-being of form, etc.;
when perfect wisdom does not possess
the own-being of perfect wisdom;
when the very all-knowledge
does not possess the own-being of all-knowledge

Subhuti: It is so, Sariputra.
Form itself does not possess the own-being of form, etc.
Perfect wisdom does not possess the mark (of being) 'perfect wisdom.'
A mark does not possess the own-being of a mark.
The marked does not possess the own-being of being marked,
and own-being does not possess the mark of [being] own-being.

Sariputra: Nevertheless, the Bodhisattva who trains in this
will go forth to all-knowledge?

Subhuti: He will.
Because all dharmas are unborn,
and do not go forth.
When he courses thus,

a Bodhisattva comes near to all-knowledge.

To the extent that he comes near to all-knowledge,
his body, thought and marks shall become perfectly pure,
for the sake of maturing beings,
and he shall meet with the Buddhas.

It is thus that a Bodhisattva
who courses in perfect wisdom
comes near to all-knowledge.

Subhuti said further
concerning the Bodhisattva:
He courses in a sign
when he courses in form, etc.,
or in the sign of form, etc.,

or in the idea that
'form is a sign,'
or in the production of form,
or in the stopping or destruction of form,
or in the idea that 'form is empty,'

or 'I course,'
or 'I am a Bodhisattva.'
For he actually courses in the idea
'I am a Bodhisattva' as a basis.

Or, when it occurs to him
'he who courses thus,
courses in perfect wisdom and develops it,'
– he courses only in a sign.

Such a Bodhisattva
should be known as unskilled in means.

Sariputra: How then must a Bodhisattva course
if he is to course in perfect wisdom?

Subhuti: He should not course

in the skandhas,
 nor in their sign,
 nor in the idea that
 ‘the skandhas are signs,’

nor in the production of the skandhas,
 in their stopping or destruction,

nor in the idea that
 ‘the skandhas are empty,’

or ‘I course,’
 or ‘I am a Bodhisattva.’

And it should not occur to him,
 ‘he who courses thus,
 courses in perfect wisdom and develops it.’

He courses,
 but he does not entertain such ideas as
 ‘I course,’
 ‘I do not course,’

‘I course and I do not course,’
 ‘I neither course nor do I not course,’

and the same [four] with ‘I will course.’

He does not go near any dharma at all,
 because all dharmas are unapproachable
 and unappropriable.

The Bodhisattva then has the concentrated insight
 ‘Not grasping at any dharma’ by name,
 vast, noble,
 unlimited and steady,
 not shared by any of the Disciples
 or Pratyekabuddhas.

When he dwells in this concentrated insight,

a Bodhisattva will quickly win the full enlightenment
which the Tathagatas of the past have predicted for him.

But when he dwells in that concentration,
he does not review it,
nor think
'I am collected,'

'I will enter into concentration,'
'I am entering into concentration,'
'I have entered into concentration.'

All that
in each and every way
does not exist for him.

Sariputra: Can one show forth
that concentration?

Subhuti: No, Sariputra.
Because that son of good family
neither knows
or perceives it.

Sariputra: You say
that he neither knows
nor perceives it?

Subhuti: I do,
for that concentration
does not exist.

The Lord: Well said, Subhuti.
And thus should a Bodhisattva
train therein,
because then he trains
in perfect wisdom.

Sariputra: When he thus trains,
he trains in perfect wisdom?

The Lord: When he thus trains,
he trains in perfect wisdom.

Sariputra: When he thus trains,
which dharmas does he train in?

The Lord: He does not train in any dharma at all.
Because the dharmas do not exist
in such a way as foolish, untaught,
common people
are accustomed to suppose.

Sariputra: How then do they exist?

The Lord: As they do not exist,
so they exist.
And so, since they do not exist [avidyamana],
they are called [the result of] ignorance [avidya].

Foolish, untaught,
common people
have settled down in them.
Although they do not exist,
they have constructed all the dharmas.

Having constructed them,
attached to the two extremes,
they do not know or see those dharmas
[in their true reality].
So they construct all dharmas
which yet do not exist.

Having constructed them,
they settle down in the two extremes.
They then depend on that link
as a basic fact,
and construct past,
future and present dharmas.

After they have constructed,
 they settle down in name and form.
 They have constructed all dharmas
 which yet do not exist,
 but while they construct all dharmas,
 which yet do not exist,
 they neither know nor see the path
 which is that which truly is.

In consequence they do not go forth
 from the triple world,
 and do not wake up to the reality limit.
 For that reason they come to be styled ‘fools.’
 They have no faith in the true dharma.

But a Bodhisattva does not settle down
 in any dharma.

Sariputra: When he trains thus,
 is a Bodhisattva trained in all-knowledge?

The Lord: When he thus trains himself,
 a Bodhisattva is not even trained
 in all-knowledge,
 and yet he is trained in all dharmas.

When he thus trains himself,
 a Bodhisattva is trained in all-knowledge,
 comes near to it,
 goes forth to it.

Subhuti: If, O Lord,
 someone should ask,
 - ‘Will this illusory man
 be trained in all-knowledge,
 will he come near it,
 will he go forth to it?’
 - How should one explain it?

The Lord: I will ask you

a counter-question
which you may answer
as best you can.

Subhuti: Well said, O Lord.
And the Venerable Subhuti
listened to the Lord.

The Lord: What do you think, Subhuti,
is form, etc., one thing,
and illusion another?

Subhuti: No Lord.
Because it is not so
that illusion is one thing,
and form, etc., another;

the very form is illusion,
the very illusion is form.

The Lord: What do you think, Subhuti,
is that notion 'Bodhisattva,'
that denomination,
that concept,
that conventional expression,
- in the five grasping skandhas?

Subhuti: Yes, it is.
Because a Bodhisattva who trains himself
in perfect wisdom
should train himself like an illusory man
for full enlightenment.

For one should bear in mind
that the five grasping aggregates
are like an illusory man.

Because the Lord has said that form
is like an illusion.

And what is true of form,
is true also of the six sense organs,
and of the five [grasping] aggregates.

Subhuti: Will not Bodhisattvas
who have newly set out in the vehicle
tremble when they hear this exposition?

The Lord: They will tremble
if they get into the hands of bad friends,
but not if they get into the hands of good friends.

Subhuti: Who then
are a Bodhisattva's good friends?

The Lord: Those who instruct
and admonish him in the perfections.

Those who point out to him
the deeds of Mara,
saying 'this is how the faults and deeds
of Mara should be recognized.

These are the faults and deeds of Mara.
You should get rid of them
after you have recognized them.'

These should be known
as the good friends of a Bodhisattva,
a great being,
who is armed with the great armor,
who has set out in the great vehicle,
who has mounted on the great vehicle.

From Chapter One, 6, On the Pilgrimage of a Bodhisattva

Sariputra: As I understand the teaching of the Venerable Subhuti,
a Bodhisattva also is a non-production.

But if a Bodhisattva is a non-production,
how then does he go on the difficult pilgrimage,
and how can he possibly endure the experience of those sufferings
[which he is said to undergo] for the sake of beings?

Subhuti: I do not look for a Bodhisattva
who goes on the difficult pilgrimage.

In any case, one who courses in the perception of difficulties
is not a Bodhisattva.

Because one who has generated a perception of difficulties
is unable to work the weal of countless beings.

On the contrary,
he forms the notion of ease,
he forms that notion that all beings,
whether men or women,
are his parents and children,
and thus he goes
on the pilgrimage of a Bodhisattva.

A Bodhisattva should therefore
identify all beings with his parents or children,
yes, even with his own self,
like this:
'As I myself want to be quite free from all sufferings,
just so all beings want to be quite free from all sufferings.'

In addition
with regard to all beings
one should form the notion:
'I ought not to desert all these beings.
I ought to set them free
from the quite measureless heap
of sufferings!

And I should not produce
towards them
a thought of hate,
even though I might be dismembered a hundred times!’

It is thus
that a Bodhisattva should lift up his heart.

When he dwells as one whose heart is such,
then he will neither course nor dwell
as one who perceives difficulties.

And further
a Bodhisattva should produce the thought that
‘as in each and every way
a self does not exist,
and is not got at,
so in each and every way
all dharmas do not exist,
and are not got at.’

He should apply this notion to all dharmas,
inside and outside.

When he dwells as one whose heart is such
then he will neither course,
nor dwell,
as one who perceives difficulties.

But when the Venerable Sariputra said
that ‘a non-production
is the Bodhisattva,’
indeed, it is so,
‘a non-production
is the Bodhisattva.’

From Chapter Twenty-two, 2. Emptiness, Defilement and Purification

Subhuti: How is perfect wisdom marked?

The Lord: It has non-attachment for mark.

Subhuti: Would it be feasible to say
that that same mark
of non-attachment,
which exists in perfect wisdom,
exists also in all dharmas?

The Lord: So it is, Subhuti.
For all dharmas are isolated and empty.
Therefore that same mark
of non-attachment,
which makes perfect wisdom
isolated and empty,
also makes all dharmas
isolated and empty.

Subhuti: If all dharmas
are isolated and empty,
how is the defilement
and purification of beings conceivable?

For what is isolated
cannot be defiled or purified,
what is empty
cannot be defiled or purified,
and what is isolated and empty
cannot know full enlightenment.

Nor can one get at any dharma
outside emptiness
which has known full enlightenment,
which will know it,
or which does know it.

How then shall we understand
the meaning of this teaching!

Show us, O Lord,
show us, O Sugata!

The Lord: What do you think, Subhuti.
Do beings course for a long time
in I-making and mine-making?

Subhuti: So it is, Lord.

The Lord: Are also I-making
and mine-making empty?

Subhuti: They are, O Lord.

The Lord: It is just because of their I-making
and mine-making
that beings wander about
in birth-and-death?

Subhuti: So it is, Lord.

The Lord: It is in that sense
that the defilement of beings
becomes conceivable.

To the extent that beings
take hold of things
and settle down in them,
to that extent is there defilement.
But no one is thereby defiled.

And to the extent
that one does not take hold of things
and does not settle down in them,
to that extent can one conceive
of the absence of I-making
and mine-making.

In that sense
 can one form the concept
 of the purification of beings,

i.e. to the extent that
 they do not take hold of things
 and do not settle down in them,
 to that extent there is purification.
 But no one is therein purified.

When a Bodhisattva courses thus,
 he courses in perfect wisdom.

It is in this sense
 that one can form the concept
 of the defilement and purification of beings
 in spite of the fact
 that all dharmas are isolated and empty.

Subhuti: This is truly wonderful!
 And a Bodhisattva who courses thus,
 he courses in perfect wisdom.
 Because he then does not course in form,
 or the other skandhas.

When he courses thus,
 a Bodhisattva cannot be crushed
 by the whole world
 with its Gods,
 men and Asuras.

When he courses thus,
 a Bodhisattva surpasses the coursing
 of all the persons
 who belong to the vehicle
 of the Disciples and Pratyekabuddhas,
 and he gains an insuperable position.

For Buddhahood is insuperable,

and so is Tathagatahood,
the state of the Self-Existent,
the state of all-knowledge.

A Bodhisattva,
who day and night passes his time
dwelling on these mental activities
associated with perfect wisdom,
is quite near full enlightenment
and shall quickly know it.

From Chapter Eight, 2., and 3. Attachments and Non-Attachment

The Lord: Well said, Subhuti.
For also
names and signs
are sources of attachment.

Subhuti: It is wonderful, O Lord,
to see the extent to which
this perfection of wisdom
has been well taught,
well explained,
well rounded off.

The Lord even announces
these sources of attachment.

Sariputra: Which, Subhuti,
are these attachments?

Subhuti: It is an attachment
if one perceives that the skandhas are empty,
that past dharmas are past dharmas,
future dharmas are future dharmas,
and present dharmas are present dharmas.

It is an attachment
if one forms the notion
that someone who belongs
to the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas
begets so great a heap of merit
through his first production
of the thought of enlightenment.

Sakra: In which manner, Subhuti,
does the thought of enlightenment
become a source of attachment?

Subhuti: One becomes attached
when one perceives

this thought of enlightenment as
 ‘this is the first thought of enlightenment,’

and if one converts it
 into full enlightenment
 while conscious that one does so.

For it is quite impossible
 to turn over
 the essential original nature of thought.

One should therefore keep in agreement with true reality
 when one makes others see the highest,
 and rouses them
 to win supreme enlightenment.

In that way
 one does not waste one’s self away,
 and the manner which one rouses others
 to win the highest
 has the sanction of the Buddhas.
 And one succeeds in abandoning
 all those points of attachment.

The Lord: Well said, Subhuti,
 you make the Bodhisattvas aware
 of these points of attachment.

I will now announce other,
 more subtle, attachments.
 Listen to them well,
 and pay good attention.
 I will teach them to you.

“Well said, O Lord,”
 and the Venerable Subhuti
 listened in silence.

The Lord: Here Subhuti,
 a son or daughter of good family,

full of faith,
 attends to the Tathagata through a sign.
 But, so many signs,
 so many attachments.
 For, from signs, comes attachment.

It is thus that he is conscious
 that he rejoices in all the dharmas
 without outflows of the Buddhas and Lords,
 past,
 future and present,

and that,
 after rejoicing,
 he turns over into full enlightenment
 the wholesome root
 which is associated with his act of jubilation.

As a matter of fact,
 however,
 the true nature of dharmas is not past,
 nor future,
 nor present;
 it lies quite outside the three periods of time;

and for that reason
 it cannot possibly be converted,
 cannot be treated as a sign,
 or as an objective support,
 and it cannot be seen,
 nor heard,
 nor felt,
 nor known.

3. Non-Attachment

Subhuti: Deep is the essential original nature of the dharmas.

The Lord: Because it is isolated.

Subhuti: Deep is the essential nature
of perfect wisdom.

The Lord: Because its essential nature
is pure and isolated,
therefore has the perfection of wisdom
a deep essential nature.

Subhuti: Isolated is the essential nature
of perfect wisdom.
I pay homage
to the perfection of wisdom.

The Lord: Also all dharmas
are isolated in their essential nature.
And the isolatedness
of the essential nature of all dharmas
is identical with the perfection of wisdom.
For the Tathagata has fully known
all dharmas as not made.

Subhuti: Therefore all dharmas
have the character
of not having been fully known
by the Tathagata?

The Lord: It is just through
their essential nature
that those dharmas
are not a something.

Their nature
is no-nature,
and their no-nature
is their nature.

Because all dharmas have one mark only,
i.e. no mark.

It is for this reason

that all dharmas have the character
of not having been fully known
by the Tathagata.

For there are no two natures of dharma,
but just one single one
is the nature of all dharmas.

And the nature of all dharmas is no nature,
and their no-nature
is their nature.

It is thus that all those points of attachment are abandoned.

Subhuti: Deep, O Lord,
is the perfection of wisdom.

The Lord: Through a depth
like that of space.

Subhuti: Hard to understand, O Lord,
is the perfection of wisdom.

The Lord: Because nothing is fully known by the enlightened.

Subhuti: Unthinkable, O Lord,
is the perfection of wisdom.

The Lord: Because the perfection of wisdom
is not something
that thought ought to know,
or that thought has access to.

Subhuti: Not something made
is the perfection of wisdom, O Lord.

The Lord: Because no maker
can be apprehended.

Subhuti: How then

under these circumstances,
should a Bodhisattva
course in perfect wisdom?

The Lord: A Bodhisattva
courses in perfect wisdom if,
while coursing,
he does not course in the skandhas;

or if he does not course
in the conviction
that the skandhas are impermanent,
or that they are empty,
or that they are neither defective
nor entire.

And if he does not even course
in the conviction that
form is not the defectiveness
or entirety of form,
and so for the other skandhas,
then he courses in perfect wisdom.

Subhuti: It is wonderful, O Lord,
how well the reasons for the attachment
and non-attachment
of the Bodhisattvas
have been explained.

The Lord: One courses in perfect wisdom
if one does not course in the idea
that form is with attachment,
or without attachment.

And as for form,
so for the other skandhas, the sight organ, etc.,
to feeling born from eye contact;

so for the physical elements,
the six perfections,

the thirty-seven wings of enlightenment,

the powers,
the grounds of self-confidence,
the analytical knowledges,

the eighteen special Buddha-dharmas,
and the fruits of the holy life,
from the fruit of a Streamwinner
to all-knowledge.

When he courses thus,
a Bodhisattva
does not generate attachment to anything,
from form to all-knowledge.

For all-knowledge is unattached,
it is neither bound nor freed,
and there is nothing that has risen above it.

It is thus, Subhuti,
that Bodhisattvas
should course in perfect wisdom
through rising completely above
all attachments.

Chapter Sixteen, 5. Requisites of Going Forth to Enlightenment

Subhuti: How should a Bodhisattva behave,
 how should he train,
 if he wants to go forth
 to the full and supreme enlightenment?

The Lord: The Bodhisattva
 should adopt the same attitude
 towards all beings,
 his mind should be even towards all beings,

he should not handle others
 with an uneven mind,
 but with a mind which is friendly,
 well disposed,
 helpful,

free from aversion,
 avoiding harm and hurt,
 he should handle others

as if they were his mother,
 father,
 son or daughter.

As a saviour of all beings
 should a Bodhisattva behave
 towards all beings,
 should he train himself,
 if he wants to know
 the full and supreme enlightenment.

He should, himself,
 stand in the abstention from all evil,

he should give gifts,
 guard his morality,

perfect himself in patience,

exert vigour,
enter into the trances,

achieve mastery over wisdom,
survey conditioned coproduction,
both in direct and in reverse order;

and also others
he should instigate to do the same,
incite and encourage them.

In the same way
he should stand in everything
from the meditation on the truths

to the stage
when he reaches the certainty
that it is as a Bodhisattva
that he will be saved,

and when he matures beings,
and also others
he should instigate to do the same,
incite and encourage them.

When he longs eagerly for all that
and trains himself in it,
then everything will be uncovered to him,
from form
to the established order of dharma.

From Chapter Twenty-four, 1, and 2. The Bodhisattva's Right Attitude to Other Bodhisattvas

Furthermore, Ananda,
 when a Bodhisattva fights
 with a person
 belonging to the vehicle of the Disciples,
 disputes and quarrels with him,
 abuses and reviles him,
 feels ill-will and hatred for him,
 then Mara thinks that

“surely, this son of good family
 will keep away from all-knowledge,
 he will remain far away from it.”

Mara becomes still more jubilant
 if a person belonging
 to the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas
 fights with someone else
 who also belongs to the vehicle
 of the Bodhisattvas,
 for he thinks that

“both these Bodhisattvas
 remain far from all-knowledge.”

But if a Bodhisattva
 who has had his prediction
 fights with another Bodhisattva
 who has also had his prediction,
 and cherishes malice for him

for a great many aeons he must,
 if he has such an attitude of mind,
 put on the armour
 [which enables him to struggle against it],
 unless, of course,
 he has abandoned all-knowledge completely.

2. The Bodhisattva's Right Attitude to Other Bodhisattvas

Ananda: Can he escape
from those attitudes of mind,
or is he definitely condemned
to go on putting on the armour
for all that length of time?

The Lord: I have, Ananda,
demonstrated a dharma
which includes the possibility of escape,
for persons of the Disciple-vehicle,
for persons of the Pratyekabuddha-vehicle,
for persons of the Bodhisattva-vehicle.

As to the person
who belongs to the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas
and who has quarreled with someone else
who also belongs to the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas,

if he does not confess his fault,
does not promise restraint in future,
harbours a latent bias towards hate,
and dwells tied to that bias,

of that person
I do not teach the escape
[i.e. from the consequence of his action],
but he is definitely condemned
to go on putting on the armour
for all that length of time.

But I teach his escape
if he confesses his fault,
promises restraint in future,
and reflects as follows:

“I
whose duty it is
to drive away,

to pacify and appease the quarrels,
disputes and
conflicts of all beings,
yet I myself engage in disputes!

It is indeed a loss to me,
and not a gain,
that I should answer back as I am spoken to.

When I should be
to all beings
a bridge across the sea of birth-and-death,
I nevertheless say to another,
'the same to you,'
or return a harsh and rough answer.

This is not the way
in which I should speak.

In fights,
quarrels and disputes
I should behave like a senseless idiot,
or like a dumb sheep.

When I hear someone using offensive,
abusive,
insulting words towards me,
my heart should not cherish malice
for others.

It is not meet and proper for me
to perceive the faults of others,
or to think
that what is being said
about the faults of others
is worth listening to.

For I,
since I am earnestly intent
[on full enlightenment],

should not do harm to others.

When I should make all beings happy
by giving them
everything that brings happiness,
when I should lead them to Nirvana
after having won full enlightenment,
yet
nevertheless
I bear ill will!

I should not bear ill will
even against those
who have offended against me,
and I must avoid getting into a rage,
and I must make a firm effort
in that direction.

Even when my life is in danger
I must not get into a rage,
and no frown should appear on my face.”

Of such a Bodhisattva
I teach the escape.

This is the attitude
which a Bodhisattva
should adopt also towards persons
who belong to the vehicle of the Disciples.

Never to get angry with any being,
that is the attitude of mind
one should adopt
towards all beings.

What attitude then
should a Bodhisattva have
towards other persons
belonging to the vehicle
of the Bodhisattvas?

The same as towards the Teacher.

He should have the attitude that
 “these Bodhisattvas are my teachers.”

Surely,
 they have mounted on the same vehicle as I,
 have ascended by the same path,
 are of like intention with me,
 have set out in the same vehicle as I.

Wherein they should be trained,
 that is the method
 by which I should be trained.

But if some of them dwell
 in a dwelling contaminated
 [by the ideas of Disciples
 and Pratyekabuddhas],
 then I should not do likewise.

If,
 however
 they dwell in an uncontaminated dwelling,
 in mental activities
 associated with all-knowledge,
 then I also
 should train as they do.

No obstacles to full enlightenment
 can arise to a Bodhisattva
 who trains himself in this way
 in all-knowledge,
 and he quickly knows full enlightenment.

From Chapter Twenty-six, 1. Sakra Praises the Bodhisattvas

Thereupon it occurred to Sakra,
 Chief of Gods:
 A Bodhisattva,
 even if he courses only just so far,
 surpasses all;
 how much more so
 when he has known full enlightenment!

A great gain has accrued to those beings,
 a good life do they live
 when their thought strides in all-knowledge;
 how much more so
 when they have raised their thought
 to full enlightenment!

To be envied are those beings,
 the very cream of all beings,
 who will know full enlightenment!

Thereupon Sakra,
 Chief of Gods,
 conjured up Mandarava flowers,
 saluted them reverently,
 scattered them over the Tathagata,
 and said:

May those persons
 who belong to the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas,
 and who have raised their thoughts
 to full enlightenment,

succeed in their resolve
 to know full enlightenment,
 and,
 after that,
 to transfer all beings
 who are borne along by
 the great flood of birth and death

to the smooth yonder shore!

May that thought of enlightenment
which they have wished for,
thought over and taken hold of,
bring to fulfillment in them
the dharmas of a Buddha,

and dharmas associated with all-knowledge,
the dharmas of the Self-Existent,
the insuperable dharmas!

I have not even the slightest suspicion
that those Bodhisattvas,
who are endowed
with the great compassion,
might turn away from full enlightenment,

or that those persons
who belong to the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas,
and who have set out for full enlightenment
might turn away from it.

On the contrary,
I am sure
that this resolve to win full enlightenment
will increase more and more in them,
as they survey the ills
which afflict beings
on the plane of birth-and-death.

For through their great compassion
they desire the welfare of the world
with its Gods,
men and Asuras,

desire to benefit it,
are full of pity for it,
they,
who are endowed with this attitude of mind,

dwell in the attitude of mind
which is expressed in their resolution
that

“we have crossed over,
we shall help beings to cross over!
Freed,
we shall free them!
Recovered,
we shall help them to recover!
Gone to Nirvana,
we shall lead them to Nirvana!”

From Chapter Twenty, 3. Doors to Deliverance and Vows About Beings

Subhuti: A doer of what is hard
 is the Bodhisattva,
 a doer of what is most hard,
 if he courses and dwells in emptiness,
 if he enters into
 the concentration on emptiness,
 and yet
 does not realise the reality-limit!

Exceedingly wonderful is this,
 O Well-Gone!

The Lord: So it is, Subhuti.
 For the Bodhisattva has not abandoned
 all beings.
 He has made the special vows
 to set free all those beings.

If the mind of a Bodhisattva
 forms the aspiration
 not to abandon all beings
 but to set them free,

and if
 in addition
 he aspires for the concentration
 on emptiness,
 the Signless,
 the Wishless,
 i.e. for the three doors of deliverance,

then that Bodhisattva should be known
 as one who is endowed with skill in means,
 and he will not realise the reality-limit midway,
 before his Buddha-dharmas
 have become complete.

For it is this skill means which protects him.

His thought of enlightenment
 consists in just that fact
 that he does not want
 to leave all beings behind.

When he is thus endowed
 with the thought of enlightenment
 and with skill in means,
 then he does not midway
 realise the reality-limit.

Moreover,
 while a Bodhisattva either actually
 contemplates those deep stations,
 i.e., the three doors to deliverance,

or becomes desirous of contemplating them,
 he should
 in his mind
 form the following aspiration:

“For a long time those beings,
 because they have the notion of existence,
 course in the apprehension of basis.
 After I have won full enlightenment
 I shall demonstrate dharma to those beings
 so that they may forsake
 the erroneous views about a basis.”

As a free agent
 he then enters into the concentration
 on emptiness,
 on the Signless,
 on the Wishless.

A Bodhisattva who is thus endowed
 with this thought of enlightenment
 and with skill in means
 does not midway
 realise the reality-limit.

On the contrary,
 he does not lose his
 concentration on friendliness,
 compassion,
 sympathetic joy
 and impartiality.

For,
 upheld by skill in means,
 he increases his pure dharmas
 more and more.

His faith, etc.,
 becomes keener and keener,
 and he acquires the powers,
 the limbs of enlightenment,
 and the path.

Moreover,
 a Bodhisattva reflects that

“for a long time those beings,
 because they perceive dharmas,
 course in the apprehension of a basis,”

and he develops this aspiration
 as he did the former one,
 entering the concentration on emptiness.

Furthermore,
 he reflects that by perceiving a sign,
 those beings have,
 for a long time,
 coursed in the sign,
 and he deals with this aspiration as before,
 entering the concentration on the Signless.

Furthermore,
 a Bodhisattva reflects:

“For a long time
 have these beings been perverted
 by the perceptions of permanence,
 of happiness,
 of the self,
 of loveliness.

I will act in such a way that,
 after my full enlightenment,
 I shall demonstrate dharma
 in order that they may forsake
 the perverted views
 of the perception of permanence,
 of happiness,
 of the self,
 of loveliness,

and
 in order that they may learn that
 ‘impermanent is all this, not permanent;
 ill is all this, not happiness;
 without self is all this, not with a self;
 repulsive is all this, not lovely.’

“Endowed with this thought of enlightenment,
 and with the previously described
 skill in means,
 taken hold of by perfect wisdom,
 he does not realize the reality-limit midway,
 before all his Buddha-dharma are complete.

He dwells thus,
 and he has entered on the concentration
 on the Wishless,
 but he does not lose his concentration
 on friendliness, etc.

For,
 upheld by skill in means,

he increases more and more
his pure dharmas.

His faith, etc.,
becomes keener and keener,
and he acquires the powers,
the limbs of enlightenment,
and the path.

If a Bodhisattva raises
the following thought:

“These beings also
have for a long time
been in the habit of coursing
in the apprehension of a basis,
and even just now they do so.

They have
for a long time
been in the habit
of coursing in the apprehension of a basis,
and even just now they do so.

They have for a long time
been in the habit
of coursing in the perception of signs,

in perverted views,
in perceptions of material objects,
in perceptions of unreal objects,
in wrong views,
and even now they continue to do so.

Thus will I act that these faults
in each and every way
may cease to be in them,
that they will be inconceivable in them”;

If a Bodhisattva brings all beings to mind

in such a way,
if he is endowed with this recollection
of all beings,
with this production of thought,
and with skill in means,
if he is taken hold of by perfect wisdom,

and if,
endowed with all these qualities,
he thus contemplates the true nature
of those deep dharmas
-through their emptiness,
or Signlessness,
or Wishlessness,

or through their being unaffected,
unproduced,
without birth,
without any positivity

then it is quite impossible
that such a Bodhisattva,
who is endowed with such a cognition,
could either fall into the Uneffected,
or become intimate
with what belongs to the triple world.
That cannot possibly be.

From Chapter Six, 2. The Range of Jubilation

Subhuti: A Bodhisattva,
 a great being,
 considers the world
 with its ten directions,
 in every direction,
 extending everywhere.
 He considers the world systems,
 quite immeasurable,
 quite beyond reckoning,
 quite measureless,
 quite inconceivable,
 infinite and boundless.

He considers in the past period,
 in each single direction,
 in each single world
 system,
 the Tathagatas,
 quite immeasurable,
 quite beyond reckoning,
 quite measureless,
 quite inconceivable,
 infinite and boundless,
 who have won final Nirvana
 in the realm of Nirvana
 which leaves nothing behind,

their tracks cut off,
 their course cut off,
 their obstacles annulled,
 guides through [the world of] becoming,
 their tears dried up,
 with all their impediments crushed,

their own burdens laid down,
 with their own weal reached,

in whom the fetters of becoming

are extinguished,
 whose thoughts are well freed
 by right understanding,
 and who have attained
 to the highest perfection
 in the control of their entire hearts.

He considers them,
 from where they began
 with the production of the
 thought of enlightenment,

proceeding to the time
 when they won full enlightenment,
 until they finally entered Nirvana
 in the realm of Nirvana
 which leaves nothing behind,
 and the whole span of time
 up to the vanishing
 of the good Dharma
 [as preached by each one of these Tathagatas].

He considers the mass of morality,
 the mass of concentration,
 the mass of wisdom,
 the mass of emancipation,
 the mass of the vision
 and cognition of emancipation
 of those Buddha and Lords.

In addition,
 he considers the store of merit
 associated with the six perfections,
 with the achievement
 of the qualities of a Buddha,

and with the perfections of self-confidence
 and of the powers;
 and also those associated with
 the perfection of the superknowledges,

of comprehension,
of the vows;

and the store of merit associated
with the accomplishment
of the cognition
of the all-knowing,

with the solicitude for beings,
the great friendliness
and the great compassion,
and the immeasurable
and incalculable Buddha-qualities.

And he also considers the full enlightenment
and its happiness,
and the perfection of the sovereignty
over all dharmas,
and the accomplishment
of the measureless and unconquered
supreme wonderworking power
which has conquered all,

and the power of the Tathagata's cognition
of what is truly real,
which is without covering,
attachment or obstruction,
unequaled,
equal to the unequalled,
incomparable,
without measure,

and the power of the Buddha-cognition
preeminent among the powers,
the obtainment of that supreme ease
which results
from the four grounds of self-confidence,

and the vision and cognition of a Buddha,
the perfection of the ten powers,

the obtainment of that supreme ease
which results from
the four grounds of self confidence,

and the obtainment of Dharma
through the realization
of the ultimate reality of all dharmas.

He also considers
the turning of the wheel of Dharma,
the carrying of the torch of Dharma,
the beating of the drum of Dharma,
the filling up the conch shell of Dharma,

the wielding of the sword of Dharma,
the pouring down of the rain of Dharma,
and the refreshment of all beings
through the gift of Dharma,
through its presentation to them.

He further considers the store of merit
of all those who are educated and trained
by those demonstrations of Dharma,

whether they concern
the dharmas of Buddhas,
or those of Pratyekabuddhas,
or of Disciples, - who believe in them,
who are fixed on them,
who are bound to end up
in full enlightenment.

He also considers the store of merit,
associated with the six perfections,
of all those Bodhisattvas
of whom those Buddhas and Lords
have predicted full enlightenment.

He considers the store of merit
of all those persons

who belong to the Pratyekabuddha vehicle,
and of whom
the enlightenment of a Pratyekabuddha
has been predicted.

He considers the meritorious work
founded on giving,
morality,
and meditational development,
of the four assemblies
of those Buddhas and Lords,
i.e. of the monks and nuns,
the laymen and laywomen.

He considers the roots of good
planted during all that time by Gods,
Nagas, Yakshas,
Gandharvas, Asuras,
Garudas, Kinnaras and Mahoragas,

by men and ghosts,
and also by animals,
at the time when those Buddhas and Lords
demonstrated the Dharma,
and when they entered Pairinirvana,
and when they had entered
Parinirvana

thanks to the Buddha, the Lord,
thanks to the Dharma,
thanks to the Samgha,
and thanks to persons of right mind-culture.

[In his meditation
the Bodhisattva] piles up the roots of good of all those,
all that quantity of merit without exception or remainder,
rolls it into one lump,
weighs it,
and rejoices over it
with the most excellent and sublime jubilation,

the highest and utmost jubilation,
with none above it,
unequaled,
equaling the unequalled.

Having thus rejoiced,
he utters the remark:
“I turn over into full enlightenment
the meritorious work founded on jubilation.
May it feed the full enlightenment
[of myself and of all beings]!”