



## Chapter 4: Recitations & Discourses

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**Note:** *Chanting from the Heart* offers readers many ceremonies, practices, discourses and chants with music. Practitioners, and especially those who lead the practice within a Sangha, may wish to refer to that larger volume.

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## 4.1 Recitations & Chants

You can use these recitations at any time as part of your Daily Practice or for special occasions. Many can be followed on their own; or you might like to substitute one or more for those offered in the Daily Practice session (see Chapter 3.1). Some can be included as part of group practice or even as guided meditations.

### Love Meditation

*We begin practising this love meditation focusing on ourselves: "I". Until we are able to love and take care of ourselves, we cannot be of much help to others. Next, we can offer the practice for others (substituting "he/she" or "they"), starting with someone we love, next someone we like, then someone neutral to us, and finally focusing on someone who has made us suffer.*

May I be peaceful, happy, and light in body and spirit.

May I be safe and free from injury.

May I be free from anger, afflictions, fear, and anxiety.

May I learn to look at myself with the eyes of understanding and love.

May I be able to recognise and touch the seeds of joy and happiness in myself.

May I learn to identify and see the sources of anger, craving and delusion in myself.

May I know how to nourish the seeds of joy in myself every day.

May I be able to live fresh, solid and free.

May I be free from attachment and aversion, but not be indifferent.



**Teachings on Love** by Thich Nhat Hanh, Parallax Press 1997. In this book Thây offers other practices to nourish love and compassion, for ourselves and for others.

### The Five Remembrances

*These Five Remembrances help us to identify and look deeply at the seeds of fear. They can be recited daily, read aloud as a guided meditation, or used as a silent meditation by individual practitioners.*

I am of the nature to grow old.

There is no way to escape growing old.

*Bell*

I am of the nature to have ill-health.

There is no way to escape having ill-health.

*Bell*

I am of the nature to die.

There is no way to escape death.

*Bell*

All that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the nature to change.

There is no escape being separated from them.

*Bell*

I inherit the results of my actions in body, speech and mind.

My actions are the ground on which I stand.



*Two bells*

### **The Five Awarenesses**

*These verses are used in the Plum Village Wedding Ceremony and are to be recited by couples on the full-moon and new-moon days.*

We are aware that all generations of our ancestors  
and all future generations are present in us.

*Bell*

We are aware of the expectations that our ancestors,  
our children and their children have of us.

*Bell*

We are aware that our joy, peace, freedom and harmony  
are the joy, peace, freedom and harmony  
of our ancestors, our children and their children.

*Bell*

We are aware that understanding is the very foundation of love.

*Bell*

We are aware that blaming and arguing can never help us  
and only creates a wider gap between us;  
that only understanding, trust and love  
can help us to change and grow.

*Two bells*

### **Gatha on Impermanence**

The day is now ended:  
our lives are shorter.  
Now we look carefully:  
what have we done?

Noble Sangha, with all of our heart,  
let us be diligent, engaging in the practice.

Let us live deeply, free from our afflictions,  
aware of impermanence,  
so that life does not drift away without meaning.

*Two bells*





## Invoking the Bodhisattvas' Names

*To support your aspiration to cultivate the Bodhisattvas' qualities, you may like to practise by "evoking" rather than "invoking" the Bodhisattvas' names.*

We invoke your name, Avalokiteshvara. We aspire to learn your way of listening in order to help relieve the suffering in the world. You know how to listen in order to understand. We invoke your name so that we can practise listening with all our attention and open-heartedness. We will sit and listen without any prejudice. We will sit and listen without judging or reacting. We will sit and listen in order to understand. We will sit and listen so attentively that we will be able to hear what the other person is saying and also what has been left unsaid. We know that just by listening deeply we already alleviate a great deal of pain and suffering in the other person.

*Bell*

We invoke your name, Manjushri. We aspire to learn your way, which is to be still and to look deeply into the heart of things and into the hearts of people. We will look with all our attention and open-heartedness. We will look with unprejudiced eyes. We will look without judging or reacting. We will look deeply so that we will be able to see and understand the roots of suffering, through the impermanent and selfless nature of all that is. We will practise your way of using the sword of understanding to cut through the bonds of suffering, thus freeing ourselves and other species.

*Bell*

We invoke your name, Samantabhadra. We aspire to practise your vow to act with the eyes and heart of compassion, to bring joy to one person in the morning and to ease the pain of one person in the afternoon. We know that the happiness of others is our own happiness, and we aspire to practise joy on the path of service. We know that every word, every look, every action and every smile can bring happiness to others. We know that if we practise wholeheartedly, we ourselves may become an inexhaustible source of peace and joy for our loved ones and for all species.

*Bell*

We evoke your name Ksitigarbha. We aspire to learn your way so we can be present where there is darkness, suffering, oppression and despair, so that we may bring light, hope, relief and liberation to those places. We are determined not to forget about or abandon those who are in desperate situations. We shall do our best to establish contact with them when they cannot find a way out of their suffering, those whose cries for help, justice, equality and human rights are not being heard. We know that hell can be found in many places on Earth. We will do our best not to contribute to creating more hells on Earth, and to help transform the hells that already exist. We shall practise in order to realise the qualities of perseverance and stability, so that, like the Earth, we can always be supportive and faithful to those in need.

*Two bells*

**The Four Recollections** (*spoken or chanted*)

The Blessed One is worthy and fully self-awakened.  
I bow before the Buddha.

*Bell*

The teaching is well expounded by the Blessed One.  
I pay homage to the Dharma.

*Bell*

The community of the Blessed One's disciples has practised well.  
I pay respect to the Sangha.

*Bell*

The Noble Teacher in whom I take refuge  
is the One who embodies and reveals the Ultimate Reality,  
is the One who is worthy of respect and offerings,  
is the One who is endowed with perfected wisdom,  
is the One who is endowed with right understanding and compassionate action,  
is the One who happily crossed to the shore of freedom,  
is the One who looked deeply to know the world well,  
is the highest charioteer, training humankind, teaching gods and humans,  
the Awakened One, the World-Honoured One.

*Bell*

The Teaching given by my Noble Teacher  
is the path I undertake, the teaching well proclaimed,  
is the teaching that can be realised right here and right now,  
is the teaching that is immediately useful and effective,  
is the teaching inviting all to come and see directly,  
is the teaching that is leading to the good, the true, the beautiful,  
extinguishing the fire of afflictions;  
it is a teaching for all sensible people to realise for themselves.

*Bell*

Practising the teachings, the Noble Community in which I take refuge  
is the community that goes in the direction of goodness, in the direction of truth,  
in the direction of beauty, in the direction of righteousness;  
is the community that is composed of four pairs and eight kinds of holy people;  
is the community that is worthy of offerings, worthy of great respect, worthy of  
admiration, worthy of salutation;  
is the community standing upon the highest fields of merit in all the world.

*Bell*

The Mindfulness Trainings, the wholesome way of living taught by my Noble Teacher,  
is the wonderful practice that remains unbroken, that remains harmonious, that  
remains flawless, that remains refined;  
is the wonderful practice that has the capacity to prevent wrongdoing and to prevent  
danger;

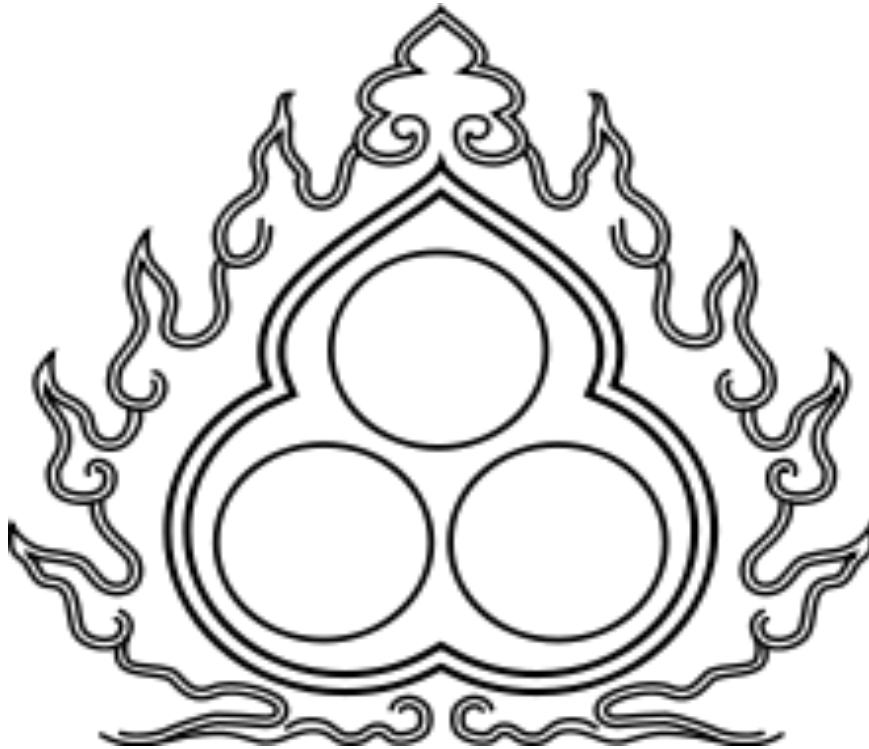


is the wonderful practice that has the capacity to protect self and others and to reveal beauty;

is the wonderful practice that is leading to concentration, leading to peacefulness, leading to insight, leading to non-fear;

is the wonderful practice that shows us the way to total emancipation and long-lasting happiness.

*Two bells*



## The Refuge Chant

Incense perfumes the atmosphere.  
A lotus blooms and the Buddha appears.  
The world of suffering and discrimination  
is filled with the light of the Rising Sun.  
As the dust of fear and anxiety settles,  
with an open heart and one-pointed mind  
I turn to the Three Jewels.

*Bell*

The Fully Enlightened One, beautifully seated, peaceful and smiling,  
the living source of understanding and compassion,  
to the Buddha I go for refuge.

*Bell*

The path of mindful living,  
leading to healing, joy, and enlightenment, the way of peace,  
to the Dharma I go for refuge.

*Bell*

The loving and supportive community of practice,  
realising harmony, awareness, and liberation,  
to the Sangha I go for refuge.

*Bell*

I am aware that the Three Gems are within my heart.  
I vow to realise them,  
practising mindful breathing and smiling,  
looking deeply into things.  
I vow to understand living beings and their suffering,  
to cultivate compassion and loving kindness,  
to practise joy and equanimity.

*Bell*

I vow to offer joy to one person in the morning,  
to help relieve the grief of one person in the afternoon,  
living simply and sanely with few possessions,  
keeping my body healthy.  
I vow to let go of all worries and anxiety  
in order to be light and free.

*Bell*

I am aware that I owe so much  
to my parents, teachers, friends, and all beings.  
I vow to be worthy of their trust, to practise wholeheartedly  
so that understanding and compassion will flower,  
helping living beings to be free from their suffering.  
May the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha  
support my efforts.

*Two bells*





## 4.2 The Mindfulness Trainings

### Reciting the Five Mindfulness Trainings

Dear Sangha, this is the moment when we enjoy reciting the Five Mindfulness Trainings together. The Five Mindfulness Trainings represent the Buddhist vision for a global spirituality and ethic. They are a concrete expression of the Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, the path of right understanding and true love, leading to healing, transformation and happiness for ourselves and for the world. To practise the Five Mindfulness Trainings is to cultivate the insight of interbeing, or Right View, which can remove all discrimination, intolerance, anger, fear and despair. If we live according to the Five Mindfulness Trainings, we are already on the path of a bodhisattva. Knowing we are on that path, we are not lost in confusion about our life in the present or in fears about the future.

Please listen to each mindfulness training with a serene mind, breathe mindfully and answer yes silently, every time you see that you have made an effort to study, practise and observe the mindfulness training read.

### The First Mindfulness Training: Reverence for life

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion, and to learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants and our Earth. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking or in my way of life. Seeing that harmful actions arise from anger, fear, greed and intolerance, which in turn come from dualistic and discriminative thinking, I will cultivate openness, non-discrimination and non-attachment to views in order to transform violence, fanaticism and dogmatism in myself and in the world.

*This is the first of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Have you made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month (two weeks)?  
(3 breaths) [Bell]*



## **The Second Mindfulness Training: True Happiness**

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing and oppression, I am committed to practising generosity in my thinking, speaking and acting. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others; and I will share my time, energy and material resources with those who are in need. I will practise looking deeply to see that the happiness and suffering of others are not separate from my own happiness and suffering; that true happiness is not possible without understanding and compassion; and that running after wealth, fame, power and sensual pleasures can bring much suffering and despair. I am aware that happiness depends on my mental attitude and not on external conditions, and that I can live happily in the present moment simply by remembering that I already have more than enough conditions to be happy. I am committed to practising Right Livelihood so that I can help reduce the suffering of living beings on Earth and stop contributing to climate change.

*This is the second of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Have you made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month (two weeks)?  
(3 breaths) [Bell]*

## **The Third Mindfulness Training: True Love**

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. Knowing that sexual desire is not love, and that sexual activity motivated by craving always harms myself as well as others, I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without mutual consent, true love, and a deep, long-term commitment. I resolve to find spiritual support for the integrity of my relationship from family members, friends, and sangha with whom there is support and trust. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. Seeing that body and mind are interrelated, I am committed to learning appropriate ways to take care of my sexual energy and to cultivating the four basic elements of true love – loving kindness, compassion, joy, and inclusiveness – for the greater happiness of myself and others. Recognizing the diversity of human experience, I am committed not to discriminate against any form of gender identity or sexual orientation. Practicing true love, we know that we will continue beautifully into the future.

*This is the third of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Have you made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month (two weeks)?  
3 breaths) [Bell]*



## The Fourth Mindfulness Training: Loving Speech and Deep Listening

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and compassionate listening in order to relieve suffering and to promote reconciliation and peace in myself and among other people, ethnic and religious groups and nations. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am committed to speaking truthfully using words that inspire confidence, joy and hope. When anger is manifesting in me, I am determined not to speak. I will practise mindful breathing and walking in order to recognise and to look deeply into my anger. I know that the roots of anger can be found in my wrong perceptions and lack of understanding of the suffering in myself and in the other person. I will speak and listen in a way that can help myself and the other person to release suffering and see the way out of difficult situations. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to utter words that can cause division or discord. I will practise Right Diligence to nourish my capacity for understanding, love, joy and inclusiveness and gradually transform anger, violence and fear that lie deep in my consciousness.

*This is the fourth of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Have you made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month (two weeks)?  
(3 breaths) [Bell]*

## The Fifth Mindfulness Training: Nourishment and Healing

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family and my society by practising mindful eating, drinking and consuming. I will practise looking deeply into my consumption of the Four Kinds of Nutriment, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition and consciousness. I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books and conversations. I will practise coming back to the present moment to be in touch with the refreshing, healing and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment. I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy and well-being in my body and consciousness and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth.

*This is the fifth of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Have you made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month (two weeks)?  
(3 breaths) [Bell]*

## **Reciting the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings**

Dear Sangha, this is the moment when we enjoy reciting the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing. The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings are the very essence of the Order of Interbeing. They are the torch lighting our path, the boat carrying us, the teacher guiding us. They allow us to touch the nature of interbeing in everything that is and to see that our happiness is not separate from the happiness of others. Interbeing is not a theory; it is a reality that can be directly experienced by each of us at any moment in our daily lives. The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings help us cultivate concentration and insight which free us from fear and the illusion of a separate self. Please listen to each mindfulness training with a serene mind. The mindfulness trainings serve as a clear mirror in which to look at ourselves. Say yes, silently, every time you see that you have made an effort to study, practise and observe the mindfulness training read.

These, then, are the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing.

### **The First Mindfulness Training: Openness**

Aware of the suffering created by fanaticism and intolerance, we are determined not to be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory or ideology, even Buddhist ones. We are committed to seeing the Buddhist teachings as guiding means that help us develop our understanding and compassion. They are not doctrines to fight, kill or die for. We understand that fanaticism in its many forms is the result of perceiving things in a dualistic and discriminative manner. We will train ourselves to look at everything with openness and the insight of interbeing in order to transform dogmatism and violence in ourselves and in the world.

This is the first Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have we made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month?

*(3 breaths) [Bell]*

### **The Second Mindfulness Training: Non-Attachment to Views**

Aware of the suffering created by attachment to views and wrong perceptions, we are determined to avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. We are committed to learning and practising non-attachment from views and being open to others' experiences and insights in order to benefit from the collective wisdom. We are aware that the knowledge that we presently possess is not changeless, absolute truth. Insight is revealed through the practice of compassionate listening, deep looking and letting go of notions rather than through the accumulation of intellectual knowledge. Truth is found in life and we will observe life within and around us in every moment, ready to learn throughout our lives.

This is the second Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have we made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month?

*(3 breaths) [Bell]*

**The Third Mindfulness Training: Freedom of Thought**

Aware of the suffering brought about when we impose our views on others, we are determined not to force others, even our children, by any means whatsoever - such as authority, threat, money, propaganda, or indoctrination - to adopt our views. We are committed to respecting the right of others to be different, to choose what to believe and how to decide. We will, however, learn to help others let go of and transform narrowness through loving speech and compassionate dialogue.

This is the third Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have we made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month?

*(3 breaths) [Bell]*

**The Fourth Mindfulness Training: Awareness of Suffering**

Aware that looking deeply at the nature of suffering can help us develop understanding and compassion, we are determined to come home to ourselves, to recognise, accept, embrace and listen to suffering with the energy of mindfulness. We will do our best not to run away from our suffering or cover it up through consumption, but practise conscious breathing and walking to look deeply into the roots of our suffering. We know we can find the path leading to the transformation of suffering only when we understand the roots of suffering. Once we have understood our own suffering, we will be able to understand the suffering of others. We are committed to finding ways, including personal contact and using the telephone, electronic, audio-visual and other means, to be with those who suffer, so we can help them transform their suffering into compassion, peace and joy.

This is the fourth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have we made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month?

*(3 breaths) [Bell]*

**The Fifth Mindfulness Training: Compassionate, Healthy Living**

Aware that true happiness is rooted in peace, solidity, freedom and compassion, we are determined not to accumulate wealth while millions are hungry and dying, nor to take as the aim of our life fame, profit, wealth or sensual pleasure, which can bring much suffering and despair. We will practise looking deeply into how we nourish our body and mind with edible foods, sense impressions, volition and consciousness. We are committed not to gamble or to use alcohol, drugs or any other products that bring toxins into our own and the collective body and consciousness such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books and conversations. We will consume in a way that preserves compassion, peace, joy and well-being in our bodies and consciousness and in the collective body and consciousness of our families, our society and the Earth.

This is the fifth Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing. Have we made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month?

*(3 breaths) [Bell]*

**The Sixth Mindfulness Training: Taking Care of Anger**

Aware that anger blocks communication and creates suffering, we are committed to taking care of our energy of anger when it arises, and to recognising and transforming the seeds of anger that lie deep in our consciousness. When anger manifests, we are determined not to do or say anything, but to practise mindful breathing or mindful walking to acknowledge, embrace and look deeply into our anger. We know that the roots of anger are not outside of ourselves but can be found in our wrong perceptions and lack of understanding of the suffering in ourselves and others. By contemplating impermanence, we will be able to look with the eyes of compassion at ourselves and those we think are the cause of our anger and to recognise the preciousness of our relationships. We will practise Right Diligence in order to nourish our capacity of understanding, love, joy and inclusiveness, gradually transforming our anger, violence and fear and helping others do the same.

This is the sixth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have we made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month?

*(3 breaths) [Bell]*

**The Seventh Mindfulness Training: Dwelling Happily in the Present Moment**

Aware that life is available only in the present moment, we are committed to training ourselves to live deeply each moment of daily life. We will try not to lose ourselves in dispersion or be carried away by regrets about the past, worries about the future, or craving, anger or jealousy in the present. We will practise mindful breathing to be aware of what is happening in the here and now. We are determined to learn the art of mindful living by touching the wondrous, refreshing and healing elements that are inside and around us, in all situations. In this way, we will be able to cultivate seeds of joy, peace, love and understanding in ourselves, thus facilitating the work of transformation and healing in our consciousness. We are aware that happiness depends primarily on our mental attitude and not on external conditions and that we can live happily in the present moment simply by remembering that we already have more than enough conditions to be happy.

This is the seventh Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have we made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month?

*(3 breaths) [Bell]*

**The Eighth Mindfulness Training: True Community and Communication**

Aware that lack of communication always brings separation and suffering, we are committed to training ourselves in the practice of compassionate listening and loving speech. Knowing that true community is rooted in inclusiveness and in the concrete practice of the harmony of views, thinking and speech, we will practise to share our understanding and experiences with members in our community in order to arrive at collective insight. We are determined to learn to listen deeply without judging or reacting and to refrain from uttering words that can create discord or cause the



community to break. Whenever difficulties arise, we will remain in our Sangha and practise looking deeply into ourselves and others to recognise all the causes and conditions, including our own habit energies, that have brought about the difficulties. We will take responsibility for all the ways we may have contributed to the conflict and keep communication open. We will not behave as a victim but be active in finding ways to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

This is the eighth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have we made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month?

*(3 breaths) [Bell]*

### **The Ninth Mindfulness Training: Truthful and Loving Speech**

Aware that words can create happiness or suffering, we are committed to learning to speak truthfully, lovingly and constructively. We will use only words that inspire joy, confidence and hope as well as promote reconciliation and peace in ourselves and among other people. We will speak and listen in a way that can help ourselves and others to transform suffering and see the way out of difficult situations. We are determined not to say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people, nor to utter words that might cause division or hatred. We will protect the happiness and harmony of our Sangha by refraining from speaking about the faults of other persons in their absence and always ask ourselves whether our perceptions are correct. We will speak only with the intention to understand and help transform the situation. We will not spread rumours nor criticize or condemn things of which we are not sure. We will do our best to speak out about situations of injustice, even when doing so may make difficulties for us or threaten our safety.

This is the ninth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have we made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month?

*(3 breaths) [Bell]*

### **The Tenth Mindfulness Training: Protecting and Nourishing the Sangha**

Aware that the essence and aim of a Sangha is the practice of understanding and compassion, we are determined not to use the Buddhist community for personal power or profit, or transform our community into a political instrument. As members of a spiritual community, we should nonetheless take a clear stand against oppression and injustice. We should strive to change the situation, without taking sides in a conflict. We are committed to learning to look with the eyes of interbeing and learning to see ourselves and others as cells in one Sangha body. As a true cell in the Sangha body, generating mindfulness, concentration and insight to nourish ourselves and the whole community, each of us is at the same time a cell in the Buddha body. We will actively build brotherhood and sisterhood, flow as a river, and practise to develop the three real powers – understanding, love and cutting through afflictions - to realise collective awakening.

This is the tenth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have we made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month?

*(3 breaths) [Bell]*

### **The Eleventh Mindfulness Training: Right Livelihood**

Aware that great violence and injustice have been done to our environment and society, we are committed not to live with a vocation that is harmful to humans or nature. We will do our best to select a livelihood that contributes to the wellbeing of all species on Earth and helps realise our ideal of understanding and compassion. Aware of economic, political and social realities around the world, as well as our interrelationship with the ecosystem, we are determined to behave responsibly as consumers and citizens. We will not invest in or purchase from companies that contribute to the depletion of natural resources, harm the Earth and deprive others of their chance to live.

This is the eleventh Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have we made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month?

*(3 breaths) [Bell]*

### **The Twelfth Mindfulness Training: Reverence for Life**

Aware that much suffering is caused by war and conflict, we are determined to cultivate nonviolence, compassion and the insight of interbeing in our daily lives and promote peace education, mindful mediation and reconciliation within families, communities, ethnic and religious groups, nations and in the world. We are committed not to kill and not to let others kill. We will not support any act of killing in the world, in our thinking, or in our way of life. We will diligently practise deep looking with our Sangha to discover better ways to protect life, prevent war and build peace.

This is the twelfth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have we made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month?

*(3 breaths) [Bell]*

### **The Thirteenth Mindfulness Training: Generosity**

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing and oppression, we are committed to cultivating generosity in our way of thinking, speaking and acting. We will practice loving kindness by working for the happiness of people, animals, plants and minerals and by sharing our time, energy and material resources with those who are in need. We are determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. We will respect the property of others, but will try to prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other beings.

This is the thirteenth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have we made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month?

*(3 breaths) [Bell]*



**The Fourteenth Mindfulness Training: True Love**

Aware that sexual desire is not love and that sexual relations motivated by craving cannot dissipate the feeling of loneliness but will create more suffering, frustration and isolation, we are determined not to engage in sexual relations without mutual understanding, love and a deep long-term commitment. We resolve to find spiritual support for the integrity of our relationships from family members, friends and sangha with whom there is support and trust. We know that to preserve the happiness of ourselves and others, we must respect the rights and commitments of ourselves and others. Recognising the diversity of human experience, we are committed not to discriminate against any form of gender identity or sexual orientation. Seeing that body and mind are interrelated, we are committed to learning appropriate ways to take care of our sexual energy and to cultivating loving kindness, compassion, joy and inclusiveness for our own happiness and the happiness of others. We must be aware of future suffering that may be caused by sexual relations. We will treat our bodies with compassion and respect. We are determined to look deeply into the Four Nutriments and learn ways to preserve and channel our vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realisation of our bodhisattva ideal. We will do everything in our power to protect children from sexual abuse and to protect couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. We will be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world and will meditate upon their future environment.

This is the fourteenth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have we made an effort to study, practise and observe it during the past month?

*(3 breaths) [Bell]*



## 4.3 Discourses (Sutras)

**Chanting from the Heart** offers practitioners many more discourses, besides those printed in this section.

### ***The Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore*** [Bell]

Avalokiteshvara

while practising deeply with  
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore,  
suddenly discovered that  
all of the five Skandhas are equally empty,  
and with this realisation  
he overcame all Ill-being.

“Listen Sariputra,  
this Body itself is Emptiness  
and Emptiness itself is this Body.  
This Body is not other than Emptiness  
and Emptiness is not other than this Body.  
The same is true of Feelings,  
Perceptions, Mental Formations,  
and Consciousness.

Listen Sariputra,  
all phenomena bear the mark of Emptiness;  
their true nature is the nature of  
no Birth no Death,  
no Being no Non-being,  
no Defilement no Purity,  
no Increasing no Decreasing.

That is why in Emptiness,  
Body, Feelings, Perceptions,  
Mental Formations and Consciousness  
are not separate self-entities.

The Eighteen Realms of Phenomena  
which are the six Sense Organs,  
the six Sense Objects,  
and the six Consciousnesses  
are also not separate self-entities.

The Twelve Links of Interdependent Arising  
and their Extinction  
are also not separate self-entities.



Ill-being, the Causes of Ill-being,  
the End of Ill-being, the Path,  
insight and attainment,  
are also not separate self-entities.

Whoever can see this  
no longer needs anything to attain.

Bodhisattvas who practise  
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore  
see no more obstacles in their mind,  
and because there  
are no more obstacles in their mind,  
they can overcome all fear,  
destroy all wrong perceptions  
and realise Perfect Nirvana.

All Buddhas in the past, present and future  
by practising the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore  
are all capable of attaining  
Authentic and Perfect Enlightenment.

Therefore Sariputra,  
it should be known that  
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore  
is a Great Mantra,  
the most illuminating mantra,  
the highest mantra,  
a mantra beyond compare,  
the True Wisdom that has the power  
to put an end to all kinds of suffering.

Therefore let us proclaim  
a mantra to praise  
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore.

*Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!*  
*Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!*  
*Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!"*

[Bell x 2]

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**Thây's Commentary Explaining his new Translation to His Students****Reasons for Retranslating the Heart Sutra**

Dear Family,

The reason Thây must retranslate the Heart Sutra is because the patriarch who originally recorded the Heart Sutra was not sufficiently skilful enough with his use of language. For this reason, it has caused much misunderstanding for almost 2,000 years.

Thây would like to share with you two stories: the story of a novice monk that paid a visit to a Zen master, and the story of a Bhikkhu who came with a question to the Eminent Master Tue Trung.

**1**

In the first story, the Zen master asked the novice monk:

"Tell me about your understanding of the Heart Sutra."

The novice monk joined his palms and replied:

"I have understood that the five skandhas are empty. There are no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body or mind; there are no forms, sounds, smells, tastes, feelings, or objects of mind; the six consciousnesses do not exist, the eighteen realms of phenomena do not exist, the twelve links of dependent arising do not exist, and even wisdom and attainment do not exist."

"Do you believe what it says?"

"Yes, I truly believe what it says."

"Come closer to me," the Zen master instructed the novice monk. When the novice monk drew near, the Zen master immediately used his thumb and index finger to pinch and twist the novice's nose.

In great agony, the novice cried out "Teacher! You're hurting me!" The Zen master looked at the novice. "Just now you said that the nose doesn't exist. But if the nose doesn't exist then what's hurting?"

**2**

The Eminent Master Tue Trung was a lay Zen master who had once served as the mentor for the young King Tran Nhan Tong, in 13th Century Vietnam. One day, a Bhikkhu paid him a visit to ask him about the Heart Sutra.

"Respected Eminent Master, what does the phrase 'form is emptiness, emptiness is form,' really mean?"

At first the Eminent Master remained silent. And then, after a while, he asked:

"Bhikkhu, do you have a body?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then, why do you say that the body does not exist?"

The Eminent Master then continued, "Do you think that in empty space there is form?"

"No, I do not see that there is form."



“Then why do you say that emptiness is form?”

The Bhikkhu stood up, bowed, and went on his way. But the Master summoned him back in order to recite to him the following gatha:

*Form is emptiness, emptiness is form, is a skilful means created temporarily by the Buddhas of the three times.*

*Emptiness is not form, form is not emptiness -*

*Their nature is always pure and illuminating, neither caught in being nor in non-being.*

In this story the Eminent Master Tue Trung seems to contradict the Heart Sutra and challenge the sacred formula '*form is emptiness and emptiness is form*,' considered inviolable in the Prajñāpāramitā literature.

Thây believes that the Eminent Master went too far. The Master was not able to see that the mistake doesn't rest in the formula, '*form is emptiness*' rather, it resides in the unskilfulness of the line, '*Therefore in emptiness there is no form.*' According to Thây, the way in which words are used in the Heart Sutra, right from the beginning up to the line: '*no birth, no death, not defiled, not immaculate, not increasing, nor decreasing*,' is already perfect. Thây's only regret is that the patriarch who recorded the Heart Sutra did not add the four words '*no being, no non-being*' immediately after the four words '*no birth, no death*,' because these four words would help us transcend the notion of being and non-being, and we would no longer get caught in such ideas as '*no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue...*' The nose of the novice monk is still sore, even today. Do you understand?

The problem begins with the line: '*Listen Shariputra, because in emptiness, there is no form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness*' (in Sanskrit: Tasmāc Śāriputra śūnya tayāmnarūpamna vedanā nasamjñāna samskara navijñānam). How funny!

It was previously stated that emptiness is form, and form is emptiness, but now you say the opposite: there is only emptiness, there is no body. This line of the sutra can lead to many damaging misunderstandings. It removes all phenomena from the category 'being' and places them into the category of 'non-being' (*no form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations or consciousness...*). Yet the true nature of all phenomena is the nature of no being nor non-being, no birth and no death. The view of 'being' is one extreme view and the view of 'non-being' is another extreme view. It is because of this unskilfulness that the novice monk's nose is still sore.

The famous gatha ascribed to the sixth patriarch Hue Nang (Hui-neng), in which he presented his insight to the fifth patriarch Hoang Nhan (Hung-jen), also expresses this notion and is also caught in the same wrong view:

*Originally, there is no Bodhi tree*

*The bright mirror does not exist either*

*From the non-beginning of time nothing has ever existed*

*So where can the dust settle?*

*A white cloud passes by and hides the mouth of the cave*

*Causing so many birds to lose their way home.*

The insight of prajñāpāramitā is the most liberating insight that helps us overcome all pairs of opposites such as birth and death, being and non-being, defilement and immaculacy, increasing and decreasing, subject and object, and so on, and helps us to get in touch with the true nature of no birth/no death, no being/no non-being etc... which is the true nature of all phenomena.

This is a state of coolness, peace, and non-fear that can be experienced in this very life, in your own body and in your own five skandhas. It is nirvana. *Just as the birds enjoy the sky, and the deer enjoy the meadow, so do the wise enjoy dwelling in nirvana.* This is a very beautiful sentence in the Nirvana Chapter of the Chinese Dharmapada.

The insight of prajñāpāramitā is the ultimate truth, transcending of all conventional truths. It is the highest vision of the Buddha. Whatever paragraph in the Tripitaka, even in the most impressive of the Prajñāpāramitā collections, if it so contradicts this, it is still caught in conventional truth. Unfortunately, in the Heart Sutra we find such a paragraph, and it is quite long.

That is why in this new translation Thây has changed the way of using words in both the original Sanskrit and the Chinese translation by Huyen Trang (Xuan-Zang). Thây translates as follows: *'That is why in emptiness, body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness are not separate self-entities.'* All phenomena are products of dependent arising; that is the main point of the prajñāpāramitā teaching. *'Even insight and attainment do not exist as separate self-entities.'* This sentence is as important as the sentence *'form is emptiness.'* Thây also has added *'no being, no non-being'* into the text. No being, no non-being is the deep vision of the Buddha stated in the Kātyāyana sutra, when he offered a definition on right view. These four words, *no being, no non-being*, will help future generations not to suffer from a twisted nose.

The Heart Sutra was intended to help the Sarvāstivādins relinquish the view of no self and no dharma. The deepest teaching of Prājñāpāramitā is the *emptiness* of self (ātmaśūnyatā) and the *emptiness* of dharma (dharmanairātmya) and *not the non-being* of self and dharma. The Buddha has taught in the Kātyāyana sutra that most people in the world are caught either in the view of being and non-being. Therefore, the sentence *'in emptiness there is no form, feelings...'* is obviously still caught in the view of non-being. That is why this sentence does not correspond to the Ultimate Truth. Emptiness of self only means the emptiness of self, not the non-being of self, just as a balloon that is empty inside does not mean that the balloon does not exist. The same is true with the emptiness of dharma: it only means the emptiness of all phenomena and not the non-existence of phenomena. It is like a flower that is made only of non-flower elements. The flower is empty of a separate existence, but that doesn't mean that the flower is not there.

The Heart Sutra made a late appearance at a time when Tantric Buddhism had begun to flourish. The patriarch who compiled the Heart Sutra wanted to encourage followers of Tantric Buddhism to practise and recite the Heart Sutra, so that's why he presented the Heart Sutra as a kind of mantra. This was also a skilful means. Thây has used the phrase, *'The Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore,'* because in the mantra there is the expression *pāragate* which means 'gone over to the other shore, the shore of wisdom'. *Pārāyana* and *pāramitā* have both been translated as *'crossing over to the*



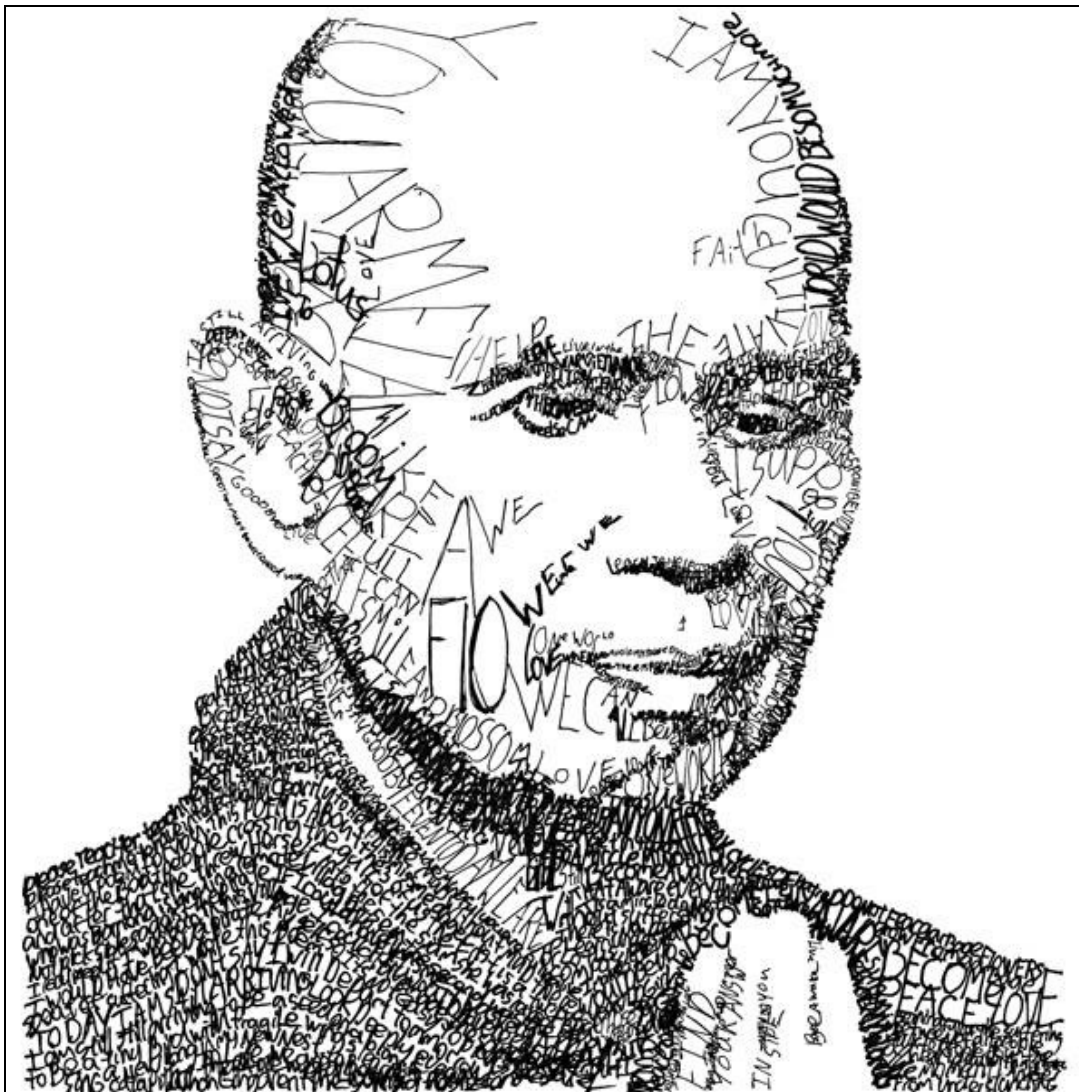
*other shore.*' In the Sutta Nipāta there is a chapter called Pārāyana which has also been translated as '*crossing over to the other shore.*'

Dear Family, I hope you enjoy practicing the new version of the Heart Sutra in English. We have an English translation and Br. Phap Linh has composed the music for the new chant. The next edition of the Chanting Book will include this new translation.

Yesterday, on the 21st of August, after finishing the translation at around 3a.m., a moon ray penetrated Thây's room.

*With love and trust,*

*Your Teacher*



***Discourse on Knowing the Better Way to Live Alone***

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when the Lord was staying at the monastery in the Jeta Grove, in the town of Shravasti. He called all the monks to him and instructed them: “Bhikkhus!”

And the bhikkhus replied: “We are here.”

The Blessed One taught: “I will teach you what is meant by ‘knowing the better way to live alone.’ I will begin with an outline of the teaching, and then I will give a detailed explanation. Bhikkhus, please listen carefully.”

“Blessed One, we are listening.”

The Buddha taught:

Do not pursue the past.

Do not lose yourself in the future.

The past no longer is.

The future has not yet come.

Looking deeply at life as it is

in the very here and now,

the practitioner dwells

in stability and freedom.

We must be diligent today.

To wait till tomorrow is too late.

Death comes unexpectedly.

How can we bargain with it?

The sage calls a person who knows

how to dwell in mindfulness night and day

‘the one who knows the better way to live alone’.

“Bhikkhus, what do we mean by ‘pursuing the past’? When someone thinks about the way her body was in the past, the way her feelings were in the past, the way her perceptions were in the past, the way her mental factors were in the past, the way her consciousness was in the past; when she thinks about these things and her mind is burdened by and attached to these things which belong to the past, then that person is pursuing the past.

“Bhikkhus, what is meant by ‘not pursuing the past’? When someone thinks about the way her body was in the past, the way her feelings were in the past, the way her perceptions were in the past, the way her mental factors were in the past, the way her consciousness was in the past; when she thinks about these things but her mind is neither enslaved by nor attached to these things which belong to the past, then that person is not pursuing the past.

“Bhikkhus, what is meant by ‘losing yourself in the future’? When someone thinks about the way his body will be in the future, the way his feelings will be in the future, the way his perceptions will be in the future, the way his mental factors will be in the future, the way his consciousness will be in the future; when he thinks about these things and his mind is burdened by and daydreaming about these things which belong to the future, then that person is losing himself in the future.





“Bhikkhus, what is meant by ‘not losing yourself in the future’? When someone thinks about the way his body will be in the future, the way his feelings will be in the future, the way his perceptions will be in the future, the way his mental factors will be in the future, the way his consciousness will be in the future; when he thinks about these things but his mind is not burdened by or daydreaming about these things which belong to the future, then he is not losing himself in the future.

“Bhikkhus, what is meant by ‘being swept away by the present’? When someone does not study or learn anything about the Awakened One, or the teachings of love and understanding, or the community that lives in harmony and awareness; when that person knows nothing about the noble teachers and their teachings, and does not practise these teachings, and thinks: ‘This body is myself; I am this body. These feelings are myself; I am these feelings. This perception is myself; I am this perception. This mental factor is myself; I am this mental factor. This consciousness is myself; I am this consciousness,’ then that person is being swept away by the present.

“Bhikkhus, what is meant by ‘not being swept away by the present’? When someone studies and learns about the Awakened One, the teachings of love and understanding, and the community that lives in harmony and awareness; when that person knows about noble teachers and their teachings, practises these teachings, and does not think: ‘This body is myself; I am this body. These feelings are myself; I am these feelings. This perception is myself; I am this perception. This mental factor is myself; I am this mental factor. This consciousness is myself; I am this consciousness,’ then that person is not being swept away by the present.

“Bhikkhus, I have presented the outline and the detailed explanation of knowing the better way to live alone.”

Thus the Buddha taught, and the bhikkhus were delighted to put his teachings into practice.

*Bhaddekaratta Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 131)*



## ***Discourse on the Eight Realisations of the Great Beings***

Wholeheartedly, day and night, a disciple of the Enlightened One should recite and meditate on the eight realisations discovered by the great beings.

**The First Realisation** is the awareness that the world is impermanent. All political regimes are subject to fall; all things composed of the four elements are empty and contain the seeds of suffering. Human beings are composed of five aggregates and are without a separate self. They are always in the process of change – constantly being born and constantly dying. They are empty of self and without sovereignty. The mind may be the source of all confusion, and the body the forest of all unwholesome actions. If we meditate on these facts, we can gradually be released from the round of birth and death.

**The Second Realisation** is the awareness that more desire brings more suffering. All hardships in daily life arise from greed and desire. Those with little desire and ambition are able to relax; their bodies and minds are free from entanglement.

**The Third Realisation** is that the human mind is always searching for possessions and never feels fulfilled. This causes unwholesome actions to ever increase. Bodhisattvas, however, always remember the principle of having few desires. They live a simple life in peace in order to practise the Way and consider the realisation of perfect understanding as their only career.

**The Fourth Realisation** is the awareness of the extent to which indolence is an obstacle to practice. For this reason, we must practise diligently to transform the unwholesome mental factors which bind us, and to conquer the four kinds of Mara, in order to free ourselves from the prisons of the five aggregates and of the three worlds.

**The Fifth Realisation** is the awareness that ignorance is the cause of the endless round of birth and death. Therefore, bodhisattvas always remember to listen and learn in order to develop their understanding and eloquence. This enables them to educate living beings and bring them to the realm of great joy.

**The Sixth Realisation** is the awareness that poverty creates hatred and anger, which creates a vicious cycle of negative thoughts and activity. When practising generosity, bodhisattvas consider everyone, friends and enemies alike, as equal. They do not condemn anyone's past wrongdoings, nor do they hate those who are presently causing harm.

**The Seventh Realisation** is that the five categories of desire lead to difficulties. Although we are in the world, we should try not to be caught up in worldly matters. A monk, for example, has in his possession only three robes and one bowl. He lives simply in order to practise the Way. His precepts keep him free of attachment to worldly things, and he treats everyone equally and with compassion.

**The Eighth Realisation** is the awareness that the fire of birth and death is raging, causing endless suffering everywhere. We should take the Great Vow to help everyone, to suffer with everyone, and to guide all beings to the realm of great joy.

These Eight Realisations are the discoveries of great beings, Buddhas and bodhisattvas who have diligently practised the way of compassion and understanding. They have sailed the Dharmakaya boat to the shore of nirvana, but then they return to the ordinary world, having abandoned the five desires, with their minds and hearts



directed toward the noble way, using these eight realisations to help all beings recognise the suffering in this world. If the disciples of the Buddha recite these eight realisations and meditate on them, they will put an end to countless misunderstandings and difficulties and progress toward enlightenment, leaving behind the world of birth and death, dwelling forever in peace.

*Sutra 779 in the Taisho Revised Tripitaka*

## ***Discourse on Love***

“He or she who wants to attain peace should practise being upright, humble, and capable of using loving speech. He or she will know how to live simply and happily, with senses calmed, without being covetous and carried away by the emotions of the majority. Let him or her not do anything that will be disapproved of by the wise ones.

“(And this is what he or she contemplates):

“May everyone be happy and safe, and may their hearts be filled with joy.

“May all living beings live in security and in peace – beings who are frail or strong, tall or short, big or small, visible or not visible, near or far away, already born or yet to be born. May all of them dwell in perfect tranquillity.

“Let no one do harm to anyone. Let no one put the life of anyone in danger. Let no one, out of anger or ill will, wish anyone any harm.

“Just as a mother loves and protects her only child at the risk of her own life, we should cultivate boundless love to offer to all living beings in the entire cosmos. We should let our boundless love pervade the whole universe, above, below and across. Our love will know no obstacles. Our heart will be absolutely free from hatred and enmity. Whether standing or walking, sitting or lying, as long as we are awake, we should maintain this mindfulness of love in our own heart. This is the noblest way of living.

“Free from wrong views, greed and sensual desires, living in beauty and realising Perfect Understanding, those who practise boundless love will certainly transcend Birth and Death.”

*Metta Sutta (Suttanipata 1)*



**Teachings on Love** by Thich Nhat Hanh offers readers a commentary on this sutra.



## ***Discourse on the Full Awareness of Breathing***

*A fuller version of this sutra is published in **Chanting from the Heart**.*

When the full moon day arrived, the Buddha, seated under the open sky, looked over the assembly of bhikkhus and began to speak:

“Reverend Bhikkhus, our community is pure and good. At its heart, it is without useless and boastful talk, and therefore it deserves to receive offerings and be considered a field of merit. Such a community is rare, and any pilgrim who seeks it, no matter how far he must travel, will find it worthy.

“O bhikkhus, the method of being fully aware of breathing, if developed and practised continuously, will have great rewards and bring great advantages. It will lead to success in practising the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. If the method of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness is developed and practised continuously, it will lead to success in the practice of the Seven Factors of Awakening. The Seven Factors of Awakening, if developed and practised continuously, will give rise to Understanding and Liberation of the Mind.

“What is the way to develop and practise continuously the method of Full Awareness of Breathing so that the practice will be rewarding and offer great benefit? It is like this, bhikkhus: the practitioner goes into the forest or to the foot of a tree, or to any deserted place, and sits stably in the lotus position, holding his body quite straight. Breathing in, he knows that he is breathing in; and breathing out, he knows that he is breathing out.

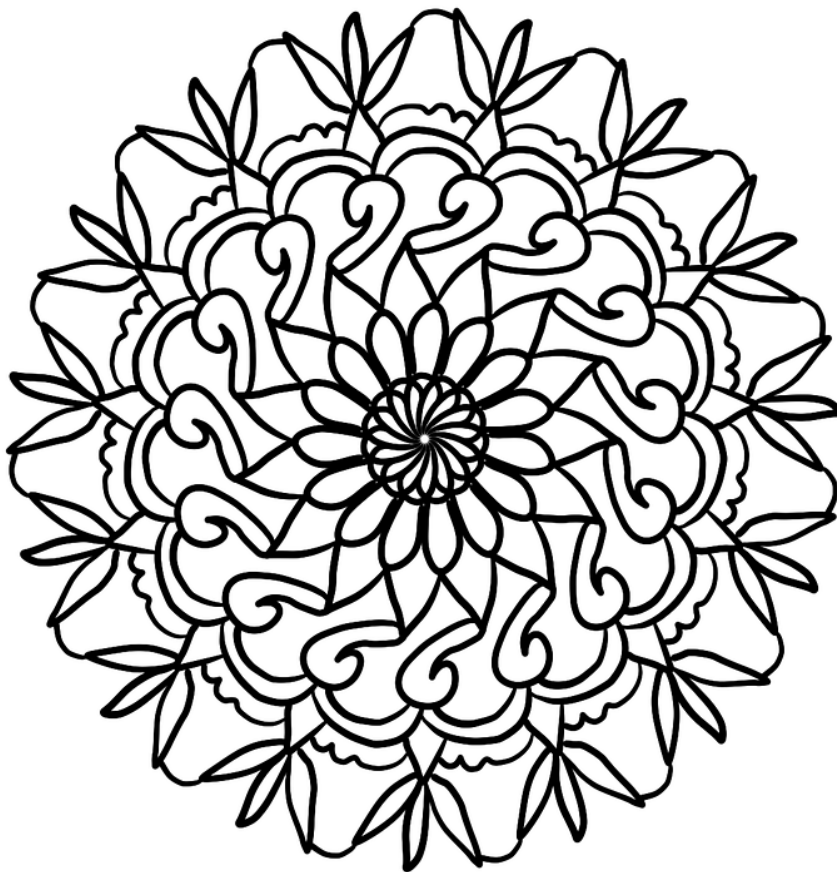
1. ‘Breathing in a long breath, I know I am breathing in a long breath. Breathing out a long breath, I know I am breathing out a long breath.’
2. ‘Breathing in a short breath, I know I am breathing in a short breath. Breathing out a short breath, I know I am breathing out a short breath.’
3. ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my whole body. Breathing out, I am aware of my whole body.’ This is how he or she practises.
4. ‘Breathing in, I calm my whole body. Breathing out, I calm my whole body.’ This is how he or she practises.
5. ‘Breathing in, I feel joyful. Breathing out, I feel joyful.’ This is how he or she practises.
6. ‘Breathing in, I feel happy. Breathing out, I feel happy.’ He or she practises like this.
7. ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my mental formations. Breathing out I am aware of my mental formations.’ He or she practises like this.
8. ‘Breathing in, I calm my mental formations. Breathing out, I calm my mental formations.’ He or she practises like this.
9. ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my mind. Breathing out, I am aware of my mind.’ He or she practises like this.
10. ‘Breathing in, I make my mind happy and at peace. Breathing out, I make my mind happy and at peace.’ He or she practises like this.



11. 'Breathing in, I concentrate my mind. Breathing out, I concentrate my mind.' He or she practises like this.
12. 'Breathing in, I liberate my mind. Breathing out, I liberate my mind.' He or she practises like this.
13. 'Breathing in, I observe the impermanent nature of all dharmas. Breathing out, I observe the impermanent nature of all dharmas.' He or she practises like this.
14. 'Breathing in, I observe the disappearance of desire. Breathing out, I observe the disappearance of desire.' He or she practises like this.
15. 'Breathing in, I observe the no-birth, no-death nature of all phenomena. Breathing out, I observe the no-birth, no-death nature of all phenomena.' He or she practises like this.
16. 'Breathing in, I observe letting go. Breathing out, I observe letting go.' He or she practises like this.

"The Full Awareness of Breathing, if developed and practised continuously according to these instructions, will be rewarding and of great benefit."

*Majjhima Nikaya 118*



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## ***The Diamond Sutra – The Diamond that Cuts through Illusion***

*A shorter extract from this sutra, with an opening gatha by Thich Nhat Hanh, is published in **Chanting from the Heart**.*

This is what I heard one time when the Buddha was staying in the monastery in Anathapindika's park in the Jeta grove near Shravasti with a community of 1,250 bhikkhus. That day, when it was time to make the round for alms, the Buddha put on his sanghati robe and, holding his bowl, went into the city of Shravasti to seek alms food, going from house to house. When the alms round was completed, he returned to the monastery to eat the mid-day meal. Then he put away his sanghati robe and his bowl, washed his feet, arranged his cushion, and sat down.

At that time, the Venerable Subhuti stood up, bared his right shoulder, put his knee on the ground, and, folding his palms respectfully, said to the Buddha: "World-Honoured One, it is rare to find such a person as you. You always give support and show special confidence in the bodhisattvas. World-Honoured One, if good women and men want to give rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind, what should they rely on and what should they do to master their thinking?"

The Buddha replied: "Well done, Subhuti. What you say is absolutely right. The Tathagata always gives support and shows special confidence in the bodhisattvas. Please listen with all of your attention and the Tathagata will explain to you. If good women and men want to give rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind they should rely on the following and master their thinking in the following way."

The Venerable Subhuti said: "Lord, we should be so happy to hear your teachings."

The Buddha said to Subhuti: "This is how the bodhisattvas mahasattvas (the great beings) master their thinking.

"However many species of living beings there are – whether born from eggs, from the womb, from moisture, or spontaneously; whether they have form or do not have form; whether they have perceptions or do not have perceptions; or whether it cannot be said of them that they have perceptions or that they do not have perceptions, all these beings we must lead to the ultimate nirvana so that they can be liberated. And when this innumerable, immeasurable, infinite number of beings have become liberated, we do not, in truth, think that a single being has been liberated. Why is this so? If, Subhuti, a bodhisattva holds onto the idea that a 'self', a person, a living being, a life span exists, that person is not an authentic bodhisattva."

"Moreover Subhuti, if a bodhisattva practises generosity, he does not rely on any object, that is to say does not rely on any form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or objects of mind to practise generosity. That, Subhuti, is the spirit in which a bodhisattva should practise generosity, not relying on signs. Why? If a bodhisattva practises generosity and does not rely on signs, then the happiness that results from this virtue cannot be



conceived of or measured. Subhuti, do you think the space in the Eastern quarter be measured?”

“No, World-Honoured One.”

“Can space in the Western, Southern, and Northern quarters, above and below be measured?”

“No, World-Honoured One.”

“Subhuti, if a bodhisattva does not rely on anything (any concept) when practising generosity, then the happiness that results from that virtue is as great as space. It cannot be measured. Subhuti, the bodhisattvas should let their minds dwell in the teachings I have just given.”

“What do you think, Subhuti? Is it possible to grasp the Tathagata by means of bodily signs?”

“No, World-Honoured One. When the Tathagata speaks of bodily signs, there are no signs that are being talked about.”

The Buddha said to Subhuti: “In a place where there is something that can be distinguished by signs, in that place there is a deception. If you can see the signless nature of signs, then you can see the Tathagata.”

The Venerable Subhuti said to the Buddha: “In times to come, will there be people who hear teachings such as this and have real confidence and faith in them?”

The Buddha replied: “Do not speak like that, Subhuti. Five hundred years after the Tathagata has passed away, there will be people who are enjoying the happiness that derives from observing the precepts. When such people hear these words, they will have confidence and faith that here is the truth. We should know that such people have sown and planted seeds not only during the lifetime of one Buddha, or even two, three, four or five Buddhas, but have, in truth, planted wholesome seeds during the lifetimes of tens of thousands of Buddhas.

“Anyone who only for a second gives rise to a pure and clear confidence, when they hear these words of the Tathagata, will attain immeasurable happiness because of this virtue. Why? Because someone like that is not caught in the sign *self*, or *person* or *living being*, or *lifespan*. They are not caught in the sign of an object of mind or the sign of a non-object of mind. They are not caught in the notion that this is a sign and that is not a sign. Why? If you are caught in the sign of an object of mind, you are caught in the sign of a self, a person, a living being, a lifespan. If you are caught in the idea that there is no object of mind, you are still caught in a self, a person, a living being, a lifespan. That is why we should not get caught in objects of mind or in the idea that objects of mind do not exist. That is the hidden meaning of the saying of the Tathagata.

“Bhikkhus, you should know that the teachings I give to you are like a raft. All teachings and objects must be let go of, much less non-teachings and non-objects.”

“What do you think, Subhuti, has the Tathagata arrived at the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind? Is there any teaching that the Tathagata gives?”

The Venerable Subhuti replied: “As far as I have understood the Lord Buddha, there is no independently existing object of mind called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind, nor is there any independently existing teaching that the Tathagata gives. Why? Because the teachings that the Tathagata has realised and has spoken of cannot be conceived of as separate, independent existences, and cannot be described. The teaching is not a self-existent thing nor is it a non-self-existent thing. Why? Because the noble teachers are only distinguished from others in terms of the non-conditioned.”

“What do you think, Subhuti? If someone were to fill the three thousand chiliocosms with the seven precious treasures as an act of generosity, would that person bring much happiness by his virtue?”

The Venerable Subhuti replied: “Yes, World-Honoured One. Because the very nature of virtue and happiness is not virtue and happiness, the Tathagata is able to talk of great virtue and happiness.”

The Buddha said: “If on the other hand there is someone who accepts the teachings in this sutra and puts them into practice, even if it is only a gatha of four lines long, and explains them to another, the happiness brought about by this person’s virtue is far greater than that brought about by the one giving the seven precious treasures. Why? Because, Subhuti, all Buddhas and the Dharma of the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind of all Buddhas arise from the teachings found in this sutra. Subhuti, what is called Buddhadharma is everything that is not Buddhadharma.”

“What do you think, Subhuti? Does a stream-enterer think like this: ‘I have attained the fruit of stream-entry.’

Subhuti replied: “No World-Honoured One. Why? Stream-enterer means to enter the stream, but in fact there is no stream to enter. One does not enter a stream that is form, nor a stream that is sound, smell, touch, taste, or object of mind. And that is what we talk about as entering a stream.”

“What do you think, Subhuti? Does a Once-Returner think like this: ‘I have attained the fruit of Once-Returning.’”

Subhuti replied: “No World-Honoured One. Why? Once-Returning means to go and return once more but in truth there is no going just as there is no returning. That is what we talk about as Once Returner.”

“What do you think, Subhuti? Does a Non-Returner think like this: ‘I have attained the fruit of No-Return.’”

Subhuti replied: “No World-Honoured One. Why? No-Return means one who does not return to this world. But in fact there cannot be a non-returning and that is what is called No-Return.”

“What do you think, Subhuti? Does an Arhat think like this: ‘I have attained the fruit of Arhat.’”





Subhuti replied: “No World-Honoured One. Why? In truth there is no separately existing object of mind that can be called Arhat. If an Arhat gives rise to the thought that he has attained to the fruit of Arhat, then he is still caught in the idea of a self, a person, a living being and a lifespan. World-Honoured One, you have often said that I have attained the concentration of peaceful abiding and in the community I am the Arhat who has most transformed need and desire. World-Honoured One, if I were to think I had attained the fruit of Arhat, then certainly you would not have said that I love to dwell in the practice of not needing.”

The Buddha asked Subhuti: “In ancient times when the Tathagata practised under Buddha Dipankara, did he attain any object of mind?”

Subhuti answered: “No, World-Honoured One. In ancient times when the Tathagata was living with Buddha Dipankara, he did not have any realisation.”

“What do you think, Subhuti? Does a bodhisattva make a serene and beautiful Buddha field?”

“No, World-Honoured One. Why? To make a serene and beautiful Buddha field is not in fact making a serene and beautiful Buddha field. And that is why it is called making a serene and beautiful Buddha field.”

The Buddha said: “So, Subhuti, all the bodhisattva mahasattvas should give rise to a pure and clear intention in this spirit. They should not give rise to the intention relying on form, nor should they rely on sound, smell, taste, touch, or objects of mind when they give rise to this intention. They should give rise to an intention with their minds not dwelling anywhere.”

“Subhuti, if there were someone with a body as big as Mount Meru, would you say that his was a large body?”

Subhuti answered: “Yes, World-Honoured One, very large. Why? What the Tathagata says is not a body, that is known as a large body.”

“Subhuti, if there were as many Ganges Rivers as the number of grains of sand in the Ganges, would you say that the number of grains of sand in all those Ganges Rivers is very many?”

Subhuti answered: “Very many indeed, World-Honoured One. If the number of Ganges Rivers were huge, how much more so the number of grains of sand in all those Ganges Rivers.”

“Subhuti, now I want to ask you this: if a daughter or son of good family were to fill the 3,000 chiliocosms with as many precious jewels as the number of grains of sand in all the Ganges Rivers as an act of generosity, would that person bring much happiness by her virtuous act?”

Subhuti replied: “Very much, World-Honoured One.”

The Buddha said to Subhuti: “If a daughter or son of a good family knows how to accept, practise, and explain this sutra to others, even if it is a gatha of four lines, the happiness that results from this virtuous act would be far greater.”

“Furthermore, Subhuti, any piece of ground on which this sutra is proclaimed, even if only one gatha of four lines is proclaimed, you should know that this will be a piece of ground where gods, men, and ashuras will come to make offerings as they make offerings to a stupa of the Buddha. If only the piece of ground is held sacred how much more the person who practises and recites this sutra. Subhuti, you should know that that person achieves something very rare and profound. Any place this sutra is kept enshrines the presence of the Buddha or one of the great disciples of the Buddha.”

After that, Subhuti asked the Buddha: “What should this sutra be called and how should we act in accordance with its teachings?”

The Buddha replied: “This sutra should be called *The Diamond that Cuts through Illusion* because it has the capacity to cut through all illusions and afflictions and take us to the shore of liberation. Why? What the Buddha has called the highest, transcendent understanding (prajnaparamita) is not in fact the highest, transcendent understanding and only because of that it is truly the highest, transcendent understanding.”

The Buddha asked: “What do you think, Subhuti? Is there any Dharma that the Tathagata teaches?”

Subhuti replied: “The Tathagata has nothing to teach, World Honoured One.”

“What do you think, Subhuti? Are there many particles of dust in the three thousand chiliocosms or not?”

“Very many, World-Honoured One.”

“Subhuti, these particles of dust, the Tathagata says are not particles of dust, and because of this, they are truly particles of dust. What the Tathagata calls chiliocosms are not in fact chiliocosms and because of this they are called chiliocosms.”

“What do you think, Subhuti? Can the Tathagata be recognised by the possession of the thirty-two marks?”

The Venerable Subhuti replied: “No, World-Honoured One. Why? Because what the Tathagata calls the thirty-two marks are not essentially marks and that is why the Tathagata calls them the thirty-two marks.”

“Subhuti, if a woman or man coming from a kind and honest family gives up her or his life as many times as there are grains of sand in the Ganges as an act of generosity and if another man or woman from a kind and honest family knows how to accept, practise, and explain this sutra to others, even if it is only a gatha of four lines, the happiness resulting from the virtuous act of the latter is far greater than the happiness resulting from the virtue of the former.”

When he had heard this much and penetrated deeply into its significance, the Venerable Subhuti was moved to tears. He said, “World-Honoured One, you are truly rare in this world. From the day when, guided by the Buddha, I attained eyes of understanding, until now, I never heard teachings so deep and wonderful as the teachings I have heard today. World-Honoured One, if someone can hear this sutra, have a pure and clear confidence in it, and arrive at insight into the truth, that person



will have realised a virtue of the rarest kind. World-Honoured One, that insight into the truth is essentially not insight and that is what the Tathagata talks of as insight into the truth.”

“World-Honoured One, today it is not difficult for me to hear this wonderful sutra, have confidence in it, understand, accept it, and put it into practice. But in the future, in five hundred years’ time if there are people who can hear this sutra, have confidence in it, accept it and put it into practice, then certainly the existence of someone like that will be great and rare. Why? That person will not be dominated by the idea of self, person, living being, and lifespan. Why? The idea of a self is not an idea, the idea of a person, of a living being, and of a lifespan are not ideas. Why? Buddhas are so-called because they have become free of ideas.”

The Buddha said to Subhuti: “That is quite right. If someone hears this sutra and is not terrified, is not afraid, you should know that that person is rare. Why? Subhuti, what the Tathagata calls *paramaparamita*, the highest transcendence is not essentially the highest transcendence, and that is why it is called the highest transcendence.

“Subhuti, the Tathagata has said that what is called transcending endurance is not transcending endurance and that is what is called transcending endurance. Why? Subhuti, one thousand lives ago when my body was cut to pieces by King Kalinga, I was not caught in the idea of self, person, living being, or lifespan.

“If at that time I had been caught in those ideas, I would have felt anger and ill-will against Kalinga. I also remember in ancient times for five hundred lifetimes I practised endurance by practising not being caught in the idea of self, person, living being, or lifespan. So Subhuti, when a bodhisattva gives rise to the unequalled mind of awakening, he has to give up all ideas. He cannot rely on form when he gives rise to that mind, nor on sound, smell, taste, touch, or object of mind. He can only give rise to that mind that is not caught in anything. A mind that abides in one thing does not really abide (in stillness). That is why the Buddha always says that the bodhisattva should not rely on form to practise generosity. Because of the real benefit to beings, the bodhisattva practises generosity in this spirit.

“The Tathagata has said that all notions are not notions and that all living beings are not living beings. Subhuti, the Tathagata is someone who speaks of things as they are, speaks what is true, and speaks in accord with reality. He does not speak deceptively or to please people. Subhuti, if we say that the Tathagata has realised a teaching, that teaching is neither graspable nor deceptive.

“Subhuti, a bodhisattva who still depends on notions to practise generosity is like someone walking in the dark: he will not see anything. But when a bodhisattva does not depend on notions, when he practises generosity, he is like someone with good sight walking in the light of the sun: he can see all shapes and forms.”

“Subhuti, if in the future there is any good man or woman who has the capacity to accept, read, and put into practice this sutra, the Tathagata will see that person with his eyes of understanding. The Tathagata will know that person, and that person will realise measureless, limitless fruit of virtue.”

Subhuti, if on the one hand, a daughter or son of a good family gives up her or his life in the morning as many times as there are grains of sand in the Ganges as an act of generosity, and gives as many again in the afternoon and as many again in the evening, and continues doing so for countless ages; and if, on the other hand, another person listens to this sutra with complete confidence and without contention, that person's happiness will be far greater. But the happiness of one who writes this sutra down, receives, recites, and explains it to others cannot be compared.

"In summary, Subhuti, this sutra brings about boundless virtue and happiness that cannot be conceived or measured. If there is someone capable of receiving, practising, reciting, and sharing this sutra with others, the Tathagata will see and know that person, and he or she will have inconceivable, indescribable, and incomparable virtue. Such a person will be able to shoulder the highest, most fulfilled, awakened career of the Tathagata. Why? Subhuti, if one is content with the small teachings, if he or she is still caught up in the idea of a self, a person, a living being, or a life span, he or she will not be able to listen, receive, recite, and explain this sutra to others.

Subhuti, any place this sutra is found is a place where gods, men, and ashuras will come to make offerings. Such a place is a shrine and should be venerated with formal ceremonies, circumambulations, and offerings of flowers and incense."

"Furthermore, Subhuti, if a son or daughter of good family, while reciting and practising this sutra, is disdained or slandered, his or her misdeeds committed in past lives, including those that could bring about an evil destiny, will be eradicated, and he or she will attain the fruit of the most fulfilled, awakened mind. Subhuti, in ancient times before I met Buddha Dipankara, I had made offerings to and had been attendant of all 84,000 multi-millions of Buddhas. If someone is able to receive, recite, study, and practise this sutra in the last epoch, the happiness brought about by this virtuous act is hundreds of thousands of times greater than that which I brought about in ancient times. In fact, such happiness cannot be conceived or compared with anything, even mathematically. Such happiness is immeasurable.

"Subhuti, the happiness resulting from the virtuous act of a son or daughter of good family who receives, recites, studies, and practises this sutra in the last epoch will be so great that if I were to explain it now in detail, some people would become suspicious and disbelieving, and their minds might become disoriented. Subhuti, you should know that the meaning of this sutra is beyond conception and discussion. Likewise, the fruit resulting from receiving and practising this sutra is beyond conception and discussion."

At that time, the Venerable Subhuti said to the Buddha: "World-Honoured One, may I ask you again that if daughters or sons of good family want to give rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind, what should they rely on and what should they do to master their thinking?"

The Buddha replied: "Subhuti, a good son or daughter who wants to give rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind should do it in this way: 'We must lead all beings to the shore of awakening, but, after these beings have become liberated, we do not, in truth, think that a single being has been liberated.' Why is this so? Subhuti, if



a bodhisattva is still caught up in the idea of a self, a person, a living being or a life span, that person is not an authentic bodhisattva. Why is that?

“Subhuti, in fact, there is no independently existing object of mind called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind. What do you think, Subhuti? In ancient times, when the Tathagata was living with Buddha Dipankara, did he attain anything called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind?”

“No, World-Honoured One. According to what I understand from the teachings of the Buddha, there is no attaining of anything called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind.”

The Buddha said: “Right you are, Subhuti. In fact, there does not exist the so-called highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind that the Tathagata attains. Because if there had been any such thing, Buddha Dipankara would not have predicted of me: ‘In the future, you will come to be a Buddha called Shakyamuni. This prediction was made because there is, in fact, nothing that can be attained that is called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind. Why? Tathagata means the suchness of all things (dharma)s. Someone would be mistaken to say that the Tathagata has attained the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind since there is not any highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind to be attained. Subhuti, the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind that the Tathagata has attained is neither graspable nor elusive. This is why the Tathagata has said: ‘All dharmas are Buddhadharma’. What are called all dharmas are, in fact, not all dharmas. That is why they are called all dharmas.

“Subhuti, a comparison can be made with the idea of a great human body.”

Subhuti said: “What the Tathagata calls a great human body is, in fact, not a great human body.”

“Subhuti, it is the same concerning bodhisattvas. If a bodhisattva thinks that she has to liberate all living beings, then she is not yet a bodhisattva. Why? Subhuti, there is no independently existing object of mind called bodhisattva. Therefore, the Buddha has said that all dharmas are without a self, a person, a living being, or a life span. Subhuti, if a bodhisattva thinks: ‘I have to create a serene and beautiful Buddha field,’ that person is not yet a bodhisattva. Why? What the Tathagata calls a serene and beautiful Buddha field is not in fact a serene and beautiful Buddha field. And that is why it is called a serene and beautiful Buddha field. Subhuti, any bodhisattva who thoroughly understands the principle of non-self and non-dharma is called by the Tathagata an authentic bodhisattva.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have the human eye?”

“Yes, World-Honoured One, the Tathagata does have the human eye.”

The Buddha asked: “Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have the divine eye?”

“Yes, World-Honoured One, the Tathagata does have the divine eye.

“Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have the eye of insight?”

“Yes, World-Honoured One, the Tathagata does have the eye of insight.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have the eye of transcendent wisdom?”

“Yes, World-Honoured One, the Tathagata does have the eye of transcendent wisdom.”

The Buddha asked: “Does the Tathagata have the Buddha eye?”

“Yes, World-Honoured One, the Tathagata does have the Buddha eye.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Buddha see the sand in the Ganges as sand?”

Subhuti said: “World-Honoured One, the Tathagata also calls it sand.”

“Subhuti, if there were as many Ganges Rivers as the number of grains of sand of the Ganges and there was a Buddha land for each grain of sand in all those Ganges Rivers, would those Buddha lands be many?”

“Yes, World-Honoured One, very many.”

The Buddha said: “Subhuti, however many living beings there are in all these Buddha lands, though they each have a different mentality, the Tathagata understands them all. Why is that? Subhuti, what the Tathagata calls different mentalities are not in fact different mentalities. That is why they are called different mentalities.”

“Why? Subhuti, the past mind cannot be grasped, neither can the present mind or the future mind.”

“What do you think, Subhuti? If someone were to fill the 3,000 chiliocosms with precious treasures as an act of generosity, would that person bring great happiness by his virtuous act?”

“Yes, very much, World-Honoured One.”

“Subhuti, if such happiness were conceived as an entity separate from everything else, the Tathagata would not have said it to be great, but because it is ungraspable, the Tathagata has said that the virtuous act of that person brought about great happiness.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be perceived by his perfectly formed body?”

“No, World-Honoured One. What the Tathagata calls a perfectly formed body is not in fact a perfectly formed body. That is why it is called a perfectly formed body.”

“What do you think, Subhuti? Can the Tathagata be perceived by his perfectly formed physiognomy?”

“No, World-Honoured One. It is impossible to perceive the Tathagata by any perfectly formed physiognomy. Why? Because what the Tathagata calls perfectly formed physiognomy is not in fact perfectly formed physiognomy. That is why it is called perfectly formed physiognomy.”

“Subhuti, do not say that the Tathagata conceives the idea: ‘I will give a teaching.’ Do not think that way. Why? If anyone says that the Tathagata has something to teach,



that person slanders the Buddha because he does not understand what I say. Subhuti, giving a Dharma talk in fact means that no talk is given. This is truly a Dharma talk?"

Then, Insight-Life Subhuti said to the Buddha: "World-Honoured One, in the future, will there be living beings who will feel complete confidence when they hear these words?"

The Buddha said: "Subhuti, those living beings are neither living beings nor non-living beings. Why is that? Subhuti, what the Tathagata calls non-living beings are truly living beings."

Subhuti asked the Buddha: "World-Honoured One, is the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind that the Buddha attained the unattainable?"

The Buddha said: "That is right, Subhuti. Regarding the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind, I have not attained anything. That is why it is called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind."

"Furthermore, Subhuti, that mind is everywhere equally. Because it is neither high nor low, it is called the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind. The fruit of the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind is realised through the practice of all wholesome actions in the spirit of non-self, non-person, non-living being, and non-life span. Subhuti, what are called wholesome actions are in fact not wholesome actions. That is why they are called wholesome actions."

"Subhuti, if someone were to fill the 3,000 chiliocosms with piles of the seven precious treasures as high as Mount Sumeru as an act of generosity, the happiness resulting from this is much less than that of another person who knows how to accept, practise, and explain the Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra to others. The happiness resulting from the virtue of a person who practises this sutra, even if it is only a gatha of four lines, cannot be described by using examples or mathematics."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Should people say that the Tathagata thinks: 'I shall bring living beings to the other shore?' Do not say that the Tathagata has the idea: 'I will bring living beings to the other shore.' Do not think like that, Subhuti. Why? In truth there is not one single living being for the Tathagata to bring to the other shore.

"If the Tathagata were to think there was, he would be caught in the idea of a self, a person, a living being, a lifespan. Subhuti, that which the Tathagata talks of as a self essentially has no self in the way that the ordinary person thinks there is a self. Subhuti, the Tathagata does not think that that person is in fact an ordinary person and only then does the Tathagata use the term 'ordinary person'."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Can someone meditate on the Tathagata by means of the thirty-two marks?"

Subhuti said: "Yes, yes reverend Sir. We should use the thirty-two marks to meditate on the Tathagata."

The Buddha said: “If you say that you can take the thirty-two marks to see the Tathagata then the Chakravartin is also a Tathagata.”

Subhuti said: “World-Honoured One, I have understood your teaching: one should not use the thirty-two marks to meditate on the Tathagata.”

Then the World-Honoured One spoke this verse:

*“Someone who looks for me in form,  
Or seeks me in sound,  
Goes on a mistaken path,  
And is unable to see the Tathagata.”*

“Subhuti, if you think the Tathagata realises the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind and does not need to have all the signs, then you are wrong. Subhuti, don’t think like that. Do not think that when we give rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind we need to see all objects of mind as non-existent, cut off from life. Do not think like that. Someone who gives rise to the highest, most fulfilled awakened mind does not contend that all objects of mind are non-existent and cut off from life.

“Subhuti, if a bodhisattva were to fill the 3,000 chiliocosms with the seven precious treasures as many as the number of sand grains in the Ganges as an act of generosity, the happiness brought about by his or her virtue is less than that brought about by someone who has understood and wholeheartedly accepted the truth that all dharmas are of selfless nature and is able to live and bear fully this truth. Why is that, Subhuti? Because a bodhisattva does not need to build up virtue and happiness.”

Subhuti asked the Buddha: “What do you mean, World-Honoured One, when you say that a bodhisattva does not need to build up virtue and happiness?”

“Subhuti, a bodhisattva gives rise to virtue and happiness but is not caught in the idea of virtue and happiness. That is why the Tathagata has said that a bodhisattva does not need to build up virtue and happiness.”

“Subhuti, if someone says that the World-Honoured One comes, goes, sits, lies down, that person has not understood what I have said. Why? The meaning of Tathagata is ‘does not come from anywhere and does not go anywhere’. That is why he is called a Tathagata.”

“Subhuti, if a woman or a man were to reduce the three thousand chiliocosms to particles of dust, do you think there would be many particles?”

Subhuti replied: “World-Honoured One, there would be very many indeed. Why? If particles of dust had a real self-existence, the Buddha would not have talked of particles of dust. What the Buddha calls particles of dust are not in essence particles of dust; that is why they can be called particles of dust. World-Honoured One, what the Tathagata calls the three thousand chiliocosms are not chiliocosms and then they are called chiliocosms. Why? If chiliocosms are real, they are an association of particles





under the conditions of being assembled into an object. That which the Tathagata calls a composite is not essentially a composite and that is why it is called a composite.”

“Subhuti, what is called a composite is just a conventional way of talking with no real basis. Only ordinary people are caught in conventional terms.”

“Subhuti, if anyone says that the Buddha has spoken of the self-view, the person view, the living being view and the lifespan view, has that person understood my meaning?”

“No, World-Honoured One. Such a person has not understood the Tathagata. Why? What the Tathagata calls the self-view, the person view, the living being view, and the lifespan view are not in essence self-view, person view, living being view, and lifespan view.”

“Subhuti, someone who gives rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind should know that this is true of all objects of mind, should see that all objects of mind are like this, should have confidence in the understanding of all objects of mind like that without having any conceptions about objects of mind. Subhuti, that which is called a conception of objects of mind, the Tathagata has said is not a conception of objects of mind and that is why it is talked about as a conception of objects of mind.

“Subhuti, if someone offered an immeasurable amount of the seven treasures to fill the worlds as infinite as space as an act of generosity, the happiness resulting from that virtue would not be equal to the happiness resulting from the virtue of a man or a woman from a kindly family when giving rise to the awakened mind reads, recites, accepts, puts into practice this sutra, and explains it to others even if only a gatha of four lines. In what spirit is the explanation given? One should give the explanation without being caught in signs, just according to how things are and without being moved by agitation. Why?

*“All composed things are like a dream,  
A phantom, a drop of dew, a flash of lightning.  
That is how to meditate on them,  
That is how to observe them.”*

After they heard the Lord Buddha deliver this sutra, the Venerable Subhuti, the bhikkhus and the bhikkhunis, laymen and laywomen, and all the gods and ashuras, filled with joy and confidence, undertook to put these teachings into practice.

#### ***Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra***

