

## 11 *The Superiority of Truth*

**“Subhuti, if there were as many Ganges rivers as the sand-grains of the Ganges, would the sand-grains of them all be many?”**

**“Many indeed, World-honoured One! Even the Ganges rivers would be innumerable; how much more so would be their sand-grains?”**

**“Subhuti, I will declare a truth to you. If a good man or good woman filled three thousand galaxies of worlds with the seven treasures for each sand-grain in all those Ganges rivers, and gave all away in gifts of alms, would he gain great merit?”**

**“Great indeed, World-honoured One!”**

**“Nevertheless, Subhuti, if a good man or good woman studies this Discourse only so far as to receive and retain four lines, and teaches and explains them to others, the consequent merit would be far greater.”**

Buddha repeats what has gone before but now without any limit to the example that he gives. His description of treasures filling universes numbering the grains of sand in an incalculable number of Ganges rivers is designed to convey the idea of wealth untold. And yet, the understanding of just one verse of the Sutra and its transmission to others is worth infinitely more. To understand the Sutra, Buddha is saying, is to know the pure mind and thus to dwell in peace. This is the greatest of all treasures, nothing is comparable. Most often, people seek to acquire more and more and so remain

in the cycle of birth and death. But this truth is regarded as infinitely superior to any material things, which are by their nature impermanent and fundamentally empty.

*Before his enlightenment, Hui Neng was an illiterate wood-cutter.*

*One day, when carrying wood to an inn, he passed beneath a window and heard a single verse of the Diamond Sutra which was being recited inside and was struck by what he heard. Hui Neng went to the Abbot who was Hung Jen, the fifth Patriarch of Ch'an and asked to be accepted as his follower. In order to test him, Hung Jen spoke contemptuously, "How could a southerner such as you, comprehend a Sutra such as this?" (In China there was prejudice against southerners, who were generally considered short, dark and illiterate.)*

*Hui Neng replied, "In terms of people, there are North and South, but in terms of the true self, there is no South or North." Recognising his insight, Hung Jen taught him the rest of the Sutra, and Hui Neng was fully enlightened.*

Hui Neng heard one verse of the Sutra and saw into his true nature. But we may be sure that he practised long and diligently in past lives, so that his Karma at that point could come to fruition. Though we are not Hui Neng, we can still be enlightened. Meditation will help us toward true insight as we slowly come back to our true home.

The verse that Hui Neng heard is said to be the one in Chapter 10:

**"Therefore, Subhuti, all Bodhisattvas, lesser and great, should develop a pure, lucid mind, not depending on sound, flavour, touch, odour or any quality. A Bodhisattva should develop a mind which alights upon no thing whatsoever; and so he should establish it."**

Meditation may bring a feeling of weightlessness and a complete absence of discomfort. There may be the feeling that one is not breathing at all or that time has no meaning. We need not be alarmed by these experiences and should have faith in the meditation process.

Being neither excited or fearful, we continue on our Path.

