



## 12 The Place of the True Doctrine

**“Furthermore, Subhuti, any place where this Sutra is taught, even though it be only one verse of four lines, will be a sanctuary for the whole world. However, those who learn the whole of this Sutra, understand it and teach it to others, they will have the highest blessing. Why? Because, Subhuti, at that place stands the Buddha and the enlightened ones.”**

Buddha tells Subhuti that wherever the Sutra is taught, even though it may be a mere fragment of the complete discourse, not only will the teacher gain immeasurable merit, but such is the truth and power of the Sutra that the place of teaching itself will be sacred to all beings. The place to which Buddha refers does not simply mean a locality, since “place” could equally be described as “no place.” What is critical here is the understanding itself; it only takes place in the original pure mind. The Sutra is about the living Buddha within. Wherever the Sutra is, there is the Buddha. But as the next chapter teaches us, we do not simply revere the teachings of the Sutra, for if we do, if we worship the words or an image, we betray Buddha and his teaching, and the loss is ours – it makes no difference to Buddha!

*When staying in someone else's home, it is considered polite to abide by their customs and to give Dana - not necessarily money, but perhaps to help out around the place and to fit in generally.*

*Once a monk came to stay at a temple. His behaviour was not at all what might have been expected from such a person. He spent much of his time eating and sleeping, even laying his bedding down next*

*to the main Buddha, in an elevated position.*

*When one day he took a Sutra with him to the toilet to use, the shrine attendant stopped the monk and challenged him about his improper behaviour. The monk said to him, "The Sutra is Buddha's words so it can be used to wipe Buddha's bottom!"*

*The shrine attendant was now uncertain what to do. The visiting monk was, in effect, claiming to be a Buddha. If so, he should prostrate himself before him. Or was he simply a sentient being behaving badly?*

*So he went to the Abbott and told him of his dilemma. The Abbott came to the monk and said, "If you can demonstrate that you are a Buddha, we will all prostrate before you. If however, you cannot, you will be beaten for the disrespect you have shown."*

*"This Sutra," said the monk, "Is part of a collection of teachings by Buddha. But still it is no more than words on paper, and not the teaching itself."*

*"Perhaps so," replied the Abbott, "But this paper has ink upon it, with which the words are written. Buddha's bottom should be wiped with paper which is absolutely clear."*

*The monk had no answer, and was revealed as a charlatan.*

