

22 No Dharma is Attainable

Then Subhuti asked Buddha: "World-honoured One, in the attainment of the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment did Buddha make no acquisition whatsoever?"

Buddha replied: "Just so, Subhuti. Through the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment I acquired not even the least thing; that is why it is called "Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment."

If Buddha had acquired something outside of himself, it would belong to the world of "me and mine," "high and low," the world of relativity and duality, in fact, the world of birth and death.

The no-mind of enlightenment exists before thought and is our true self. This Dharma is already ours and we need only to recognise it. It is not to be obtained from elsewhere.

When our wisdom opens, we can see that all promises of enlightenment must come from charlatans or the misguided. Since it is "ours," it is up to us to do the work.

The Vimalakirti Sutra contains a discourse between Sariputra, an enlightened disciple of Buddha, and Devi, a goddess.

Sariputra: "How long will it be before you attain to the state of Incomparable Enlightenment?"

Devi: "When you become a sentient being."

Sariputra: "That can never happen".

Devi: "So it is with me."

Sariputra: All Buddhas attain enlightenment. Many have attained – as many as there are grains of sand in the Ganges river. How do you explain that?"

Devi: "These are no more than words which sentient beings have spoken."

These two emancipated beings discourse for our benefit. If Buddha is a sentient being, then he is not Buddha. Similarly, as soon as a sentient being is Buddha, he or she is not a sentient being. (In Buddhism, when we talk of sentient beings, it means those who have not seen their original nature.) Because there is no attachment, we may say there is no attainment.