
VAJRA PRAJNAPARAMITA SUTRA



祇樹給孤獨園

長老須菩提

VAJRA PRAJNAPARAMITA SUTRA

— Translated from the Chinese Version of Kumarajīva —



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Frontispeice: Illustration of the original frontispeice attached to the scroll found near Dunhuang of the *Vajra Prajnaparamita Sutra* with a colophon dated to 868 CE. The original scroll is currently in the British Museum.

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VAJRA PRAJNAPARAMITA SUTRA



Translated by the Yao Qin Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva

金剛般若波羅蜜經

如是我聞。一時佛在舍衛國祇樹給孤獨園。與大比丘眾千二百五十人俱。爾時世尊食時。著衣持鉢。入舍衛大城乞食。於其城中次第乞已。還至本處。飯食訖。收衣鉢。洗足已。敷座而坐。

時長老須菩提。在大眾中。即從座起。偏袒右肩。右膝著地。合掌恭敬。而白佛言。希有世尊。如來善護念諸菩薩。善付囑諸菩薩。



1.

Thus have I heard:

Once, the Buddha was in the Kingdom of Sravasti, in Jetavana, Anathapindika's Park, with a great assembly of *bhiksus*, one thousand two hundred and fifty in all. Then, during mealtime, the World-Honored One put on his robe, took up his bowl, and entered the great city of Sravasti to beg for food. After begging from house to house inside the city, he returned to where he was staying. When he finished eating his meal, he put away his robe and bowl, washed his feet, arranged his seat, and then sat. ❀

2.

At that time, the Elder Subhuti was among the great assembly, and then arose from his seat. He bared his right shoulder, placed his right knee on the ground, joined his palms and reverentially addressed the Buddha saying, "Rare World-Honored One! The Tathagata is ever protecting and mindful of all bodhisattvas, skillfully entrusting and enjoining them all.

世尊。善男子。善女人發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心。應云何住。云何降伏其心。佛言。善哉。善哉。須菩提。如汝所說。如來善護念諸菩薩。善付囑諸菩薩。汝今諦聽。當為汝說。善男子。善女人發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心。應如是住。如是降伏其心。唯然。世尊。願樂欲聞。佛告須菩提。諸菩薩摩訶薩。應如是降伏其心。所有一切眾生之類。若卵生。若胎生。若濕生。若化生。若有色。若無色。若有想。若無想。若非有想。若非無想。

World-Honored One, when virtuous men and women develop the mind of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, on what would you say they should rely? How would you say they master their minds?”

The Buddha replied, “Excellent! Excellent! Subhuti, it is as you have said. The Tathagata is ever protecting and mindful of all bodhisattvas, skillfully entrusting and enjoining them all. Now listen attentively, and I will explain for you.”

“When virtuous men and women develop the mind of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, they should rely like this; they should master their minds like this.”

“Please continue World-Honored One, we joyfully wish to hear.” ❀

3.

The Buddha told Subhuti, “All bodhisattva *mahasattvas* should master their minds like this:

‘Of all kinds of sentient beings; whether born from an egg, womb, moisture or metamorphosis; whether with form or without form; whether with perception, or without perception, or neither with perception nor without perception...

我皆令入無餘涅槃而滅度之。如是滅度無量無數無邊眾生。實無眾生得滅度者。何以故。須菩提。若菩薩有我相、人相、眾生相、壽者相。即非菩薩。❀

復次。須菩提。菩薩於法。應無所住。行於布施。所謂不住色布施。不住聲香味觸法布施。須菩提。菩薩應如是布施。不住於相。何以故。若菩薩不住相布施。其福德不可思量。須菩提。於意云何。東方虛空可思量不。不也。世尊。

...I cause them all to enter the nirvana without remainder, liberating them. Thus by liberating immeasurable, incalculable, illimitable sentient beings, in reality, there are no sentient beings who attain liberation.’

Why is this, Subhuti? If bodhisattvas have the conception of a self, an individual, sentient beings, or lifespan, then they are not bodhisattvas.”❀

4.

“Furthermore Subhuti, regarding *dharmas*, bodhisattvas should not rely on anything while practicing giving.

This is what is called giving without relying on sight, giving without relying on sound, scent, taste, touch or thought.”

“Subhuti, bodhisattvas should give like this and not rely on appearances. Why is this? If bodhisattvas give without relying on appearances, their rewards are inconceivable.”

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? The space in the eastern direction can be conceived of, can it not?”

“It cannot World-Honored One.”

須菩提。南西北方四維上下虛空。可思量不。不也。世尊。須菩提。菩薩無住相布施。福德亦復如是不可思量。須菩提。菩薩但應如所教住。
須菩提。於意云何。可以身相見如來不。不也。世尊。不可以身相得見如來。何以故。如來所說身相。即非身相。佛告須菩提。凡所有相。皆是虛妄。若見諸相非相。則見如來。

“Subhuti, the space in the northern, western, southern, and four ordinal directions, as well as above and below can be conceived of, can it not?”

“It cannot World-Honored One.”

“Subhuti, when a bodhisattva gives without relying on appearances the rewards are also like this, inconceivable.”

“Subhuti, bodhisattvas should rely only as has been taught.” ❀

5.

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? The Tathagata can be seen by bodily appearances, can he not?”

“No, World-Honored One. The Tathagata cannot be seen by bodily appearances. Why is this? The Tathagata has said bodily appearances are not bodily appearances.”

The Buddha told Subhuti, “Every appearance whatsoever is a deception. If you can see all appearances not as appearances, then you see the Tathagata.” ❀

須菩提白佛言。世尊。頗有眾生。得聞如是言。說章句。生實信不。佛告須菩提。莫作是說。如來滅後。後五百歲。有持戒修福者。於此章句。能生信心。以此為實。當知是人。不於一佛二佛。三四五佛。而種善根。已於無量千萬佛。所種諸善根。聞是章句。乃至一念。生淨信者。須菩提。如來悉知悉見。是諸眾生。得如是無量福德。何以故。是諸眾生。無復我相。人相。眾生相。壽者相。

6.

Subhuti addressed the Buddha saying, “World-Honored One, there are many sentient beings who, upon hearing sayings and statements such as these, will generate sincere faith, are there not?”

The Buddha told Subhuti, “Do not make such comments. Five hundred years after the passing of the Tathagata there will be those who uphold the precepts and cultivate rewards. From these statements they will be able to generate faith in mind, considering them to be true. Yet you should know, these people have not merely planted wholesome roots under one Buddha, two Buddhas, three, four or five Buddhas, but have already planted all wholesome roots under immeasurable thousands of tens-of-thousands of Buddhas. Hearing these statements, even for an instant, these people will generate pure faith.”

“Subhuti, the Tathagata fully knows and fully sees all these sentient beings obtaining immeasurable rewards like this. Why is this? Because all these sentient beings are also without a conception of self, individuality, sentient beings or lifespan.

無法相。亦無非法相。何以故。是諸眾生。若心取相。則為著我人眾生壽者。若取法相。即著我人眾生壽者。何以故。若取非法相。即著我人眾生壽者。是故不應取法。不應取非法。以是義故。如來常說。汝等比丘。知我說法。如筏喻者。法尚應捨。何況非法。◆

須菩提。於意云何。如來得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提耶。如來有所說法耶。

They are without a conception of *dharmas*, and are also without a conception of non-*dharmas*.


Why is this? Because if the minds of all these sentient beings took hold of conceptions then they would become attached to a self, an individual, sentient beings or lifespan. If they took hold of a conception of *dharmas* then they would be attached to a self, an individual, sentient beings or lifespan. Why is this? Because if they took hold of a conception of non-*dharmas* then they would still be attached to a self, an individual, sentient beings or lifespan. For this reason, they should not take hold of *dharmas*, nor should they take hold of non-*dharmas*.”

“Due to this reason, the Tathagata always says:

‘All you *bhiksus*, know that the Dharma I teach is like in the parable of the raft. The Dharma should, nevertheless, be abandoned. How much more so what is not the Dharma?’” ❀

7.

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? Has the Tathagata attained *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*? Has the Tathagata spoken of any Dharma?”

須菩提言。如我解佛所說義。無有定法。名阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。亦無有定法。如來可說。何以故。如來所說法。皆不可取。不可說。非法。非非法。所以者何。一切賢聖。皆以無為法。而有差別。須菩提。於意云何。若人滿三千大千世界七寶。以用布施。是人所得福德。寧為多不。須菩提言。甚多。世尊。何以故。是福德。即非福德性。是故如來說福德多。若復有人。於此經中受持。乃至四句偈等。為他人說。其福勝彼。

Subhuti replied, “As I understand the meaning of what the Buddha has said, there is no definite *dharma* called *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, and there is no definite Dharma the Tathagata can speak of. Why is this? Because the Tathagata says that all *dharmas* cannot be held, cannot be spoken of; are neither the Dharma nor not the Dharma. How is this?”

“All saints and sages are distinguished by the unconditioned dharmas.” ❀

8.

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? If someone filled a great *trichiliocosm* with the seven treasures and used them to practice giving, the rewards this person obtained would be many, would they not?”

Subhuti replied, “Extremely many World-Honored One. Why is this? Because these rewards are not rewards by their nature. For this reason, the Tathagata says the rewards are many.”

“If, however, there was someone who received and retained even just four lines of verse from this sutra, and explained them to others, the rewards would surpass those.

何以故。須菩提。一切諸佛。及諸佛阿耨多羅三藐三菩提法。皆從此經出。須菩提。所謂佛法者。即非佛法。*

須菩提。於意云何。須陀洹能作是念。我得須陀洹果不。須菩提言。不也。世尊。何以故。須陀洹名為入流。而無所入。不入色聲香味觸法。是名須陀洹。須菩提。於意云何。斯陀含能作是念。我得斯陀含果不。須菩提言。不也。世尊。何以故。斯陀含名一往來。而實無往來。是名斯陀含。

Why is this, Subhuti? Each and every Buddha and all of their *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi dharma* come from this sutra.”

“Subhuti, what is called Buddha Dharma is not Buddha Dharma.” ❀

9.

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? Is a *srotapanna* able to have this thought, ‘I have obtained the fruit of a *srotapanna*,’ or not?”

Subhuti replied, “No, World-Honored One. Why is this? *Srotapannas* are named for entering the stream, yet there is no place to enter. Nor is there entering sight, sound, scent, taste, touch or thought. So they are called *srotapannas*.”

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? Is a *sakrdagamin* able to have this thought, ‘I have obtained the fruit of a *sakrdagamin*,’ or not?”

Subhuti replied, “No, World-Honored One. Why is this? *Sakrdagamins* are named for returning once more, yet in reality there is no more returning. So they are called *sakrdagamins*.”

須菩提。於意云何。阿那含能作是念。我得阿
那含果不。須菩提言。不也。世尊。何以故。阿那
含名為不來。而實無來。是故名阿那含。須菩
提。於意云何。阿羅漢能作是念。我得阿羅漢
道不。須菩提言。不也。世尊。何以故。實無有法
名阿羅漢。世尊。若阿羅漢作是念。我得阿羅
漢道。即為著我。人眾。生壽者。世尊。佛說我得
無諍三昧。人中最為第一。是第一離欲阿羅
漢。我不作是念。我是離欲阿羅漢。

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? Is the *anagamin* able to have this thought, ‘I have obtained the fruit of an *anagamin*,’ or not?”

Subhuti replied, “No, World-Honored One. Why is this? *Anagamins* are named for not returning, yet in reality there is no returning. Therefore they are called *anagamins*”

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? Is an *arhat* able to have this thought, ‘I have obtained the Way of an *arhat*,’ or not?”

Subhuti replied, “No, World-Honored One. Why is this? In reality there is no *dharma* called an *arhat*. *World-Honored One*, if *arhats* had this thought, ‘I have obtained the Way of an *arhat*,’ then they would become attached to a self, an individual, sentient beings or lifespan.”

“World-Honored One, the Buddha says I have attained the non-confronting *samadhi*, am first and foremost among men, the foremost *arhat* freed from desire. I do not have this thought, ‘I am an *arhat* freed from desire.’”

世尊。我若作是念。我得阿羅漢道。世尊則不
說。須菩提。是樂阿蘭那行者。以須菩提實無
所行。而名須菩提。是樂阿蘭那行。❀
佛告須菩提。於意云何。如來昔在燃燈佛所。
於法有所得不。世尊。如來在燃燈佛所。於法
實無所得。須菩提。於意云何。菩薩莊嚴佛土
不。不也。世尊。何以故。莊嚴佛土者。則非莊嚴。
是名莊嚴。是故須菩提。諸菩薩摩訶薩。應如
是生清淨心。

“World-Honored One, if I had this thought, ‘I have obtained the Way of an *arhat*,’ then the World-Honored One would not have said, ‘Subhuti is the one who enjoys *aranya* practice.’”

Since, in reality, Subhuti has nothing to practice, therefore he is called, ‘Subhuti, the one who enjoys *aranya* practice.’” ❀

10.

The Buddha told Subhuti, “What does your mind say? In the past, when the Tathagata was with Dipamkara Buddha, there was some obtainment of the Dharma, was there not?”

“World-Honored One, in the past, when the Tathagata was with Dipamkara Buddha, in reality, there was no obtainment of the Dharma.”

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? Bodhisattvas adorn the Buddha Lands, do they not?”

“No, World-Honored One. Why is this? The adornment of Buddha Lands is not adornment, so it is called adornment.”

“For this reason, Subhuti, all bodhisattva *mahasattvas* should generate a pure, clean mind like this:

不應住色生心。不應住聲香味觸法生心。應
無所住而生其心。須菩提。譬如有人身如須
彌山王。於意云何。是身為大不。須菩提言。甚
大。世尊。何以故。佛說非身是名大身。❀
須菩提。如恒河中所有沙數。如是沙等恒河。
於意云何。是諸恒河沙寧為多不。須菩提言。
甚多。世尊。但諸恒河尚多無數。何況其沙。須
菩提。我今實言告汝。若有善男子善女人。

They should not rely on sight to generate this mind, they should not rely on sound, scent, taste, touch or thought to generate this mind. They should generate this mind by not relying on anything.”

“Subhuti, suppose someone had a body like the majestic mountain Sumeru. What does your mind say? This body is great, is it not?”

Subhuti replied, “Extremely great, World-Honored One. Why is this? The Buddha says what is not a body is called a great body.”❀

11.

“Subhuti, if there were as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River, what does your mind say? All of the grains of sand in these Ganges Rivers would be many, would they not?”

Subhuti replied, “Extremely many, World-Honored One. Just the Ganges Rivers would nevertheless be an incalculable many. How much more so their sand?”

“Subhuti, I will now truthfully tell you, if there are virtuous men and women...”

以七寶滿爾所恒河沙數三千大千世界。以用布施得福多。不須菩提言甚多。世尊。佛告須菩提。若善男子善女人。於此經中。乃至受持四句偈等。為他人說。而此福德。勝前福德。復次。須菩提。隨說是經。乃至四句偈等。當知此處。一切世間天人阿修羅。皆應供養。如佛塔廟。何況有人。盡能受持讀誦。須菩提。當知是人。成就最上第一希有之法。若是經典所在之處。則為有佛。若尊重弟子。

...who fill as many great *trichiliocosms* as there are grains of sand in these Ganges Rivers with the seven treasures, and use them to practice giving, they will obtain many rewards, will they not?"

Subhuti replied, "Extremely many, World-Honored One."

The Buddha told Subhuti, "If virtuous men and women just receive and retain four lines of verse from this sutra, and explain them to others, then these rewards will surpass the aforementioned rewards." ❀

12.

"Furthermore Subhuti, following an explanation of this sutra, if even just four lines of verse, you should know that at this place every *deva*, human and *asura* of all worldly realms will make offerings as if it were a Buddha pagoda. How much more so if there was someone able to receive, retain, read and recite it completely?"

"Subhuti, you should know, this person achieves the supreme, foremost, rare Dharma. Wherever this scripture is located there will be a Buddha and an honorable disciple." ❀

爾時。須菩提白佛言。世尊。當何名此經。我等云何奉持。佛告須菩提。是經名為金剛般若波羅蜜。以是名字。汝當奉持。所以者何。須菩提。佛說般若波羅蜜。則非般若波羅蜜。須菩提。於意云何。如來有所說法。不須菩提白佛言。世尊。如來無所說。須菩提。於意云何。三千大千世界所有微塵。是為多不。須菩提言。甚多。世尊。須菩提。諸微塵。如來說非微塵。是名微塵。如來說世界。非世界。是名世界。

13.

At that time, Subhuti addressed the Buddha saying, “World-Honored One, what should this sutra be named? How should we respectfully uphold it?”

The Buddha told Subhuti, “This sutra is named the *Vajra Prajnaparamita*. By this name you should respectfully uphold it. How is this? Subhuti, the Buddha says *prajnaparamita* is not *prajnaparamita*.”

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? The Tathagata has spoken the Dharma, has he not?”

Subhuti addressed the Buddha saying, “World-Honored One, the Tathagata has not said anything.”

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? All the minute particles in a great *trichiliocosm* are many, are they not?”

Subhuti replied, “Extremely many, World-Honored One.”

“Subhuti, all minute particles, the Tathagata says, are not minute particles, so they are called minute particles.

The Tathagata says a world is not a world, so it is called a world.”

須菩提。於意云何。可以三十二相見如來。不
不也。世尊。不可以三十二相得見如來。何以
故。如來說三十二相。即是非相。是名三十二
相。須菩提。若有善男子。善女人。以恒河沙等
身命布施。若復有人。於此經中。乃至受持四
句偈等。為他人說。其福甚多。
爾時。須菩提聞說是經。深解義趣。涕淚悲泣。
而白佛言。希有世尊。佛說如是甚深經典。我
從昔來所得慧眼。未曾得聞如是之經。世尊。
若復有人得聞是經。

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? You can see the Tathagata by the thirty-two characteristics, can you not?”

“No, World-Honored One. You cannot see the Tathagata by the thirty-two characteristics.

Why is this? The Tathagata says the thirty-two characteristics are not characteristics, so they are called the thirty-two characteristics.”

“Subhuti, if there are virtuous men and women who practice giving as many lives as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River, and if, however, there are people who just receive and retain four lines of verse from this sutra and explain them to others, their rewards will be many more.”❀

14.

When Subhuti heard this sutra spoken he deeply understood its meaning and, weeping tears of lament, addressed the Buddha saying, “Rare World-Honored One, the Buddha has spoken such an extremely profound sutra. Ever since I obtained the Wisdom Eye, not once have I heard such a sutra.”

“World-Honored One, if there are also people able to hear this sutra...

信心清淨。則生實相。當知是人。成就第一希
有功德。世尊。是實相者。則是非相。是故如來
說名實相。世尊。我今得聞如是經典。信解受
持。不足為難。若當來世。後五百歲。其有眾生。
得聞是經。信解受持。是人則為第一希有。何
以故。此人無我相。人相。眾生相。壽者相。所以
者何。我相。即是非相。人相。眾生相。壽者相。即
是非相。何以故。離一切諸相。則名諸佛。佛告
須菩提。如是如是。若復有人。得聞是經。不驚
不怖。不畏。當知是人。甚為希有。

...their faithful mind will be clear and pure, and there will arise the appearance of reality. You should know these people achieve the foremost, rare merit.”

“World-Honored One, this appearance of reality is not an appearance. For this reason, the Tathagata says it is called the appearance of reality.”

“World-Honored One, now that I am able to hear a scripture such as this I believe, understand, receive and retain it without much difficulty. If in times to come, after five hundred years, there are sentient beings who are able to hear this sutra, believe, understand, receive and retain it, then these people are the foremost rare. Why is this? These people are without the conceptions of self, individuality, sentient beings or lifespan. How is this? The conception of a self is not a conception. The conceptions of individuality, sentient beings and lifespan are not conceptions. Why is this?”

“Those who are free from all conceptions are all called Buddhas.”

The Buddha told Subhuti, “So it is. So it is. If, also, there is someone able to hear this sutra who is not alarmed, not afraid, and not awed, you should know that this person is extremely rare.

何以故。須菩提。如來說第一波羅蜜。非第一波羅蜜。是名第一波羅蜜。須菩提。忍辱波羅蜜。如來說非忍辱波羅蜜。何以故。須菩提。如我昔為歌利王割截身體。我於爾時無我相。無人相。無眾生相。無壽者相。何以故。我於往昔節節支解時。若有我相。人相。眾生相。壽者相。應生瞋恨。須菩提。又念過去於五百世作忍辱仙人。於爾所世無我相。無人相。無眾生相。無壽者相。是故須菩提。菩薩應離一切相。發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心。不應住色生心。

Why is this, Subhuti? The Tathagata says the foremost *paramita* is not the foremost *paramita*, so it is called the foremost *paramita*.”

“Subhuti, the *paramita* of forbearance, the Tathagata says, is not the *paramita* of forbearance. Why is this, Subhuti? It is like in the past when my body was mutilated by the King Kali. At that time, I was without the conception of a self, an individual, sentient beings or lifespan. Why is this? Then, while I was being dismembered joint by joint, if I had the conception of a self, an individual, sentient beings or lifespan, I would have given rise to anger and hatred.”

“Subhuti, I also recall going through five hundred lifetimes as an ascetic practicing forbearance. During those lifetimes I was without the conception of a self, an individual, sentient beings or lifespan.”

“For this reason, Subhuti, bodhisattvas should be free from all conceptions and develop the mind of *aunttara-samyak-sambodhi*. They should not rely on sight to generate this mind...

不應住聲香味觸法生心。應生無所住心。若心有住則為非住。是故佛說菩薩心不應住色布施。須菩提。菩薩為利益一切眾生。應如是布施。如來說一切諸相。即是非相。又說一切眾生。則非眾生。須菩提。如來是真語者。實語者。如語者。不誑語者。不異語者。須菩提。如來所得法。此法無實無虛。須菩提。若菩薩心住於法而行布施。如人入闇。則無所見。若菩薩心不住法而行布施。

...They should not rely on sound, scent, taste, touch or thought to generate this mind.

They should generate a mind that does not rely on anything. If the mind is reliant then it will be non-reliant.

For this reason, the Buddha says the minds of bodhisattvas should not rely on sight when practicing giving.”

“Subhuti, bodhisattvas benefit all sentient beings and should practice giving like this.”

“The Tathagata says all conceptions are not conceptions, and also says that all sentient beings are not sentient beings.”

“Subhuti, the Tathagata is a speaker of what is true, what is real, what is so, what is not deceptive, and what is not altered.”

“Subhuti, this Dharma that the Tathagata has attained is neither real nor unreal.”

“Subhuti, if the minds of bodhisattvas rely on *dharmas* while practicing giving it is like someone entering the dark without anything to see. If the minds of bodhisattvas do not rely on *dharmas* while practicing giving...

如人有目。日光明照。見種種色。須菩提。當來
之世。若有善男子善女人。能於此經受持讀
誦。則為如來。以佛智慧。悉知是人。悉見是人。
皆得成就無量無邊功德。◆
須菩提。若有善男子善女人。初日分以恒河
沙等身布施。中日分復以恒河沙等身布施。
後日分亦以恒河沙等身布施。如是無量百
千萬億劫。以身布施。若復有人。聞此經典。信
心不逆。其福勝彼。

...it is like someone with eyes under brightly illuminating sunshine who sees many kinds of sights.”

“Subhuti, in ages to come, if there are virtuous men and women able to receive, retain, read and recite this sutra, then, by means of the wisdom of the Buddha, the Tathagata fully knows and fully sees these people all achieving immeasurable, illimitable merit.” ❀

15.

“Subhuti, if there are virtuous men and women who, in the beginning part of the day, practice giving as many lives as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River, and who, in the middle part of the day, also practice giving as many lives as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River, and who, in the latter part of the day as well, practice giving as many lives as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River, and like this they practice giving lives for immeasurable, hundreds of thousands of tens-of-thousands, of millions of *kalpas*, and if, however, there are people who hear this scripture with faith in mind, not disputing it, their rewards will surpass those...

何況書寫受持讀誦。為人解說。須菩提。以要言之。是經有不可思議。不可稱量。無邊功德。如來為發大乘者說。為發最上乘者說。若有人能受持讀誦。廣為人說。如來悉知是人。悉見是人。皆成就不可量。不可稱。無有邊。不可思議功德。是人等。則為荷擔如來阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。何以故。須菩提。若樂小法者。著我見。人見。眾生見。壽者見。則於此經。不能聽受讀誦。為人解說。須菩提。在在處處。若有此經。一切世間。天人阿修羅。所應供養。

...How much more so for recording, writing, receiving, retaining, reading and reciting it, and explaining it to others?”

“Subhuti, essentially speaking, this sutra has inconceivable, immeasurable, illimitable merit. The Tathagata has spoken it for those who have embarked on the Great Vehicle, for those who have embarked on the Supreme Vehicle. If there are people able to receive, retain, read and recite it and explain it widely to others, the Tathagata fully knows and fully sees all these people achieving immeasurable, indescribable, illimitable, inconceivable merit. People like this will then bare the *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* of the Tathagata. Why is this, Subhuti? If there are those who enjoy the Lesser Dharma, and are attached to the view of a self, an individual, sentient beings or lifespan, then they will be unable to listen to, receive, read or recite this sutra, or explain it to others.”

“Subhuti, wherever there is this sutra *devas*, humans and *asuras* of all worldly realms will make offerings.

當知此處。則為是塔。皆應恭敬。作禮圍繞。以諸華香而散其處。●
復次。須菩提。善男子。善女人。受持讀誦此經。若為人輕賤。是人先世罪業。應墮惡道。以今世人輕賤故。先世罪業。則為消滅。當得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。須菩提。我念過去無量阿僧祇劫。於燃燈佛前。得值八百四千萬億那由他諸佛。悉皆供養承事。無空過者。若復有人。於後末世。能受持讀誦此經。所得功德。於我所供養諸佛功德。百分不及一。

You should know this place will then become a pagoda. They will all reverentially make obeisance, circumambulate it, spreading all kinds of flowers and incense over this place.”❀

16.

“Furthermore Subhuti, virtuous men and women who receive, retain, read and recite this sutra, and who are disdained by others, should have fallen into the evil paths from karmic offenses in their former lives. Yet, due to the disdain of others in the present life the karmic offenses of their former lives will then be eradicated, and they will attain *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.”

“Subhuti, I recall in the past, immeasurable *asamkhyā kalpas* before Dipamkara Buddha, I was able to meet eighty-four thousand million *nayutas* of buddhas, making offerings to them all, and attending to them without neglect or fault. If, however, there are people in the latter times of decline able to receive, retain, read and recite this sutra, the merit I obtained from making offerings to all those buddhas compared to the merit they obtain is not even one hundredth of it...

千萬億分。乃至算數譬喻所不能及。須菩提。若善男子善女人。於後末世。有受持讀誦此經。所得功德。我若具說者。或有人聞心則狂亂。狐疑不信。須菩提。當知是經義不可思議。果報亦不可思議。

爾時。須菩提白佛言。世尊。善男子善女人。發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心。云何應住。云何降伏其心。佛告須菩提。善男子善女人。發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心者。當生如是心。我應滅度一切眾生。滅度一切眾生已。

...not even one thousandth, one ten-thousandth, one millionth, nor even is a calculation or comparison able to be reached.”

“Subhuti, if virtuous men and women in the latter times of decline receive, retain, read and recite this sutra, and I fully explained the merit they attain, the minds of some people who hear will be confounded, suspicious and untrusting.”

“Subhuti, you should know the meaning of this sutra is inconceivable, and its fruition is also inconceivable.”❀

17.

At that time, Subhuti addressed the Buddha saying, “World-Honored One, when virtuous men and women develop the mind of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, on what would you say they should rely? How would you say they master their minds?”

The Buddha told Subhuti, “Virtuous men and women who develop the mind of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* should give rise to the mind like this:

‘I must liberate all sentient beings, yet after liberating all sentient beings...

而無有一眾生實滅度者。何以故。若菩薩有
我相人相眾生相壽者相。則非菩薩。所以者
何。須菩提。實無有法。發阿耨多羅三藐三菩
提者。須菩提。於意云何。如來於燃燈佛所有
法。得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。不也。世尊。如
我解佛所說義。佛於燃燈佛所。無有法。得阿
耨多羅三藐三菩提。佛言。如是如是。須菩提。
實無有法。如來得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。須
菩提。若有法。如來得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。
者。燃燈佛。則不與我授記。

...in reality there is not a single sentient being who has been liberated.’

Why is this? If bodhisattvas have the conception of a self, an individual, sentient beings or lifespan, then they are not bodhisattvas. How is this, Subhuti? In reality there is no *dharma* that is the development of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.”

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? While the Tathagata was with Dipamkara Buddha, there was a *dharma* attained that was *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, was there not?”

“There was not, World-Honored One. As I understand the meaning of what the Buddha has said, while the Buddha was with Dipamkara Buddha, there was no *dharma* attained that was *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.”

The Buddha said, “So it is. So it is, Subhuti. In reality there is no *dharma* the Tathagata attained that is *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.

Subhuti, if there was a *dharma* the Tathagata attained that was *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, then Dipamkara Buddha would not have given me the prediction...

汝於來世當得作佛。號釋迦牟尼。以實無有法。得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。是故燃燈佛與我授記。作是言。汝於來世當得作佛。號釋迦牟尼。何以故。如來者。即諸法如義。若有人言。如來得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。須菩提。實無有法。佛得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。須菩提。如來所得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。於是中無實無虛。是故如來說。一切法皆是佛法。須菩提。所言一切法者。即非一切法。是故名一切法。

...‘In a future life you will attain buddhahood and be called Sakyamuni.’

Since, in reality, there is no dharma attained that is *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, therefore Dipamkara Buddha gave me the prediction making the statement, ‘In a future life you will attain buddhahood and be called Sakyamuni.’ Why is this?”

“*Tathagata* means the suchness of all *dharmas*.”

“If there is someone who says the Tathagata attains *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, Subhuti, in reality there is no *dharma* the Buddha attains that is *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.”

“Subhuti, within the *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* that the Tathagata attains, there is neither reality nor unreality. For this reason, the Tathagata says all *dharmas* are Buddha Dharma.”

“Subhuti, what are said to be all *dharmas* are not all *dharmas*, for this reason they are called all *dharmas*.”

須菩提。譬如人身長大。須菩提言。世尊。如來說人身長大。則為非大身。是名大身。須菩提。菩薩亦如是。若作是言。我當滅度無量眾生。則不名菩薩。何以故。須菩提。實無有法。名為菩薩。是故佛說一切法。無我無人無眾生無壽者。須菩提。若菩薩作是言。我當莊嚴佛土。是不名菩薩。何以故。如來說莊嚴佛土者。即非莊嚴。是名莊嚴。須菩提。若菩薩通達無我法者。如來說名真是菩薩。

“Subhuti, suppose someone’s body is very large.”

Subhuti replied, “World-Honored One the Tathagata says this person’s body is very large, hence it is not a large body, so it is called a large body.”

“Subhuti, bodhisattvas are also like this. If they make this statement, ‘I will liberate immeasurable sentient beings,’ then they are not called bodhisattvas. Why is this, Subhuti? In reality there is no *dharma* called a bodhisattva. For this reason, the Buddha says all *dharmas* are without self, individuality, sentience or lifespan.”

“Subhuti, if bodhisattvas make this statement, ‘I will adorn Buddha Lands,’ they are not called bodhisattvas. Why is this? The Tathagata says the adornment of Buddha lands is not adornment, so it is called adornment.”

“Subhuti, if bodhisattvas penetrate the selflessness of *dharmas* the Tathagata says this is called truly being a bodhisattva.” ❀

須菩提。於意云何。如來有肉眼。不如是世尊。
如來有肉眼。須菩提。於意云何。如來有天眼。
不如是世尊。如來有天眼。須菩提。於意云何。
如來有慧眼。不如是世尊。如來有慧眼。須菩
提。於意云何。如來有法眼。不如是世尊。如來
有法眼。須菩提。於意云何。如來有佛眼。如
是世尊。如來有佛眼。須菩提。於意云何。恒河
中所有沙。佛說是沙不。

18.

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? The Tathagata has physical eyes, does he not?”

“So it is, World-Honored One. The Tathagata has physical eyes.”

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? The Tathagata has the Divine Eye, does he not?”

“So it is, World-Honored One. The Tathagata has the Divine Eye.”

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? The Tathagata has the Wisdom Eye, does he not?”

“So it is, World-Honored One. The Tathagata has the Wisdom Eye.”

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? The Tathagata has the Dharma Eye, does he not?”

“So it is, World-Honored One. The Tathagata has the Dharma Eye.”

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? The Tathagata has the Buddha Eye, does he not?”

“So it is, World-Honored One. The Tathagata has the Buddha Eye.”

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? As for all the sand in the Ganges River, the Buddha has spoken of this sand, has he not?”

如是世尊。如來說是沙。須菩提。於意云何。如一恒河中所有沙。有如是沙等恒河。是諸恒河所有沙數佛世界。如是寧為多不。甚多。世尊。佛告須菩提。爾所國土中所有眾生。若干種心。如來悉知。何以故。如來說諸心。皆為非心。是名為心。所以者何。須菩提。過去心不可得。現在心不可得。未來心不可得。須菩提。於意云何。若有人滿三千大千世界七寶。以用布施。是人以是因緣。

“So it is, World-Honored One. The Tathagata has spoken of this sand.”

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? If there were as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in a single Ganges River, and there were as many Buddha worlds as there are grains of sand in all these Ganges Rivers, this would be many, would it not?”

“Extremely many, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha told Subhuti, “The Tathagata fully knows the various types of minds of all the sentient beings in those lands. Why is this? The Tathagata says all minds are not minds, so they are called minds. How is this, Subhuti?”

“The past mind cannot be obtained. The present mind cannot be obtained. The future mind cannot be obtained.”❀

19.

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? If there was someone who filled a great *trichiliocosm* with the seven treasures and used them to practice giving, then due to these causes and conditions...

得福多不。如是世尊。此人以是因緣。得福甚多。須菩提。若福德有實。如來不說得福德多。以福德無故。如來說得福德多。❀
須菩提。於意云何。佛可以具足色身見不。不也。世尊。如來不應以具足色身見。何以故。如來說具足色身。即非具足色身。是名具足色身。須菩提。於意云何。如來可以具足諸相見不。

...the rewards this person obtained would be many, would they not?”

“So it is, World-Honored One. This person, due to these causes and conditions, would obtain extremely many rewards.”

“Subhuti, if rewards existed in reality, the Tathagata would not have said the rewards obtained would be many. Because of the inexistence of rewards, the Tathagata says the rewards obtained would be many.” ❀

20.

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? The Buddha can be seen by his perfectly formed body, can he not?”

“No, World-Honored One. The Tathagata should not be seen by his perfectly formed body. Why is this? The Tathagata says a perfectly formed body is not a perfectly formed body, so it is called a perfectly formed body.”

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? The Tathagata can be seen by all of the perfect characteristics, can he not?”

不也。世尊。如來不應以具足諸相見。何以故。如來說。諸相具足。即非具足。是名諸相具足。

❁

須菩提。汝勿謂如來作是念。我當有所說法。莫作是念。何以故。若人言。如來有所說法。即為謗佛。不能解我所說故。須菩提。說法者。無法可說。是名說法。爾時。慧命須菩提白佛言。世尊。頗有眾生。於未來世。聞說是法。生信心不。

“No, World-Honored One. The Tathagata should not be seen by all of the perfect characteristics.

Why is this? The Tathagata says the perfection of all characteristics is not perfect, so it is called the perfection of all characteristics.”❀

21.

“Subhuti, you should not claim the Tathagata has this thought, ‘I must have spoken the Dharma.’ Do not have this thought. Why is this? If people say the Tathagata has spoken the Dharma, then they slander the Buddha because they are unable to understand what I have said.”

“Subhuti, in speaking the Dharma there is no Dharma that can be spoken, so it is called speaking the Dharma.”

At that time, the Wise Subhuti addressed the Buddha saying, “World-Honored One, there are many sentient beings in their future lives who will hear this Dharma spoken and generate faith in mind, are there not?”

佛言。須菩提。彼非眾生。非不眾生。何以故。須菩提。眾生者。如來說非眾生。是名眾生。須菩提白佛言。世尊。佛得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。為無所得耶。如是如是。須菩提。我於阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。乃至無有少法可得。是名阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。復次。須菩提。是法平等。無有高下。是名阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。以無我無人無眾生無壽者。修一切善法。則得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。

The Buddha said, “Subhuti, there are neither sentient beings nor non-sentient beings. Why is this, Subhuti?”

Sentient beings, the Tathagata says, are not sentient beings, so they are called sentient beings.” ❀

22.

Subhuti addressed the Buddha saying, “World-Honored One, has the Buddha attained *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* without attaining anything?”

“So it is. So it is, Subhuti. Regarding my *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, there is not even the slightest *dharma* that can be attained, so it is called *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.” ❀

23.

“Furthermore Subhuti, this Dharma is universal and without variance, so it is called *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*. By being without a self, individuality, sentient beings or lifespan in the cultivation of all wholesome *dharma*s one attains *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.”

須菩提。所言善法者。如來說非善法。是名善法。
須菩提。若三千大千世界中所有諸須彌山王。如是等七寶聚。有人持用布施。若人以此般若波羅蜜經。乃至四句偈等。受持讀誦。為他人說。於前福德百分不及一。百千萬億分。乃至算數譬喻所不能及。
須菩提。於意云何。汝等勿謂如來作是念。我當度眾生。須菩提。莫作是念。何以故。實無有眾生如來度者。若有眾生如來度者。

“Subhuti, what are said to be wholesome *dharmas*, the Tathagata says, are not wholesome *dharmas*, so they are called wholesome *dharmas*.” ❀

24.

“Subhuti, if there was someone who took heaps of the seven treasures that were like all the majestic Sumeru mountains in a great *trichiliocosm* and used them to practice giving, and if someone receives, retains, reads and recites even just four lines of verse from this *Prajnaparamita Sutra* and explains them to others, the previous rewards are not even one hundredth of it, not even one thousandth, one ten-thousandth, one millionth, nor even is a calculation or comparison able to be reached.” ❀

25.

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? You should not claim the Tathagata has this thought, ‘I will liberate sentient beings.’ Subhuti, do not have this thought. Why is this? In reality there are no sentient beings the Tathagata liberates. If there were sentient beings the Tathagata liberates...”

如來則有我人眾生壽者。須菩提。如來說有我者。則非有我。而凡夫之人。以為有我。須菩提。凡夫者如來說則非凡夫。❀
須菩提。於意云何。可以三十二相觀如來不。須菩提言。如是如是。以三十二相觀如來。佛言。須菩提。若以三十二相觀如來者。轉輪聖王。則是如來。須菩提白佛言。世尊。如我解佛所說義。不應以三十二相觀如來。爾時世尊而說偈言。

...the Tathagata would then have the conception of a self, an individual, sentient beings or lifespan.”

“Subhuti, the Tathagata says an existent self is not an existent self, yet ordinary people consider there to be an existent self. Subhuti, ordinary people, the Tathagata says, are not ordinary people.” ❀

26.

“Subhuti, what does your mind say? The Tathagata can be perceived by the thirty-two characteristics, can he not?”

Subhuti replied, “So it is, so it is. The Tathagata is perceived by the thirty-two characteristics.”

The Buddha said, “Subhuti, if one perceives the Tathagata by the thirty-two characteristics, then a wheel-turning sage king is the Tathagata.”

Subhuti addressed the Buddha saying, “World-Honored One, as I understand the meaning of what the Buddha has said, the Tathagata should not be perceived by the thirty-two characteristics.”

At that time, the World-Honored One spoke the verse:

若以色見我 以音聲求我
是人行邪道 不能見如來

須菩提。汝若作是念。如來不以具足相故。得
阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。須菩提。莫作是念。如
來不以具足相故。得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。
汝若作是念。發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提者。說
諸法斷滅。莫作是念。何以故。發阿耨多羅三
藐三菩提者。於法不說斷滅相。

If I am seen by sight,
Or sought by sound,
This person walks the wrong path,
Unable to see Tathagata. ❀

27.

“Subhuti, if you have this thought, ‘It is not because of the perfect characteristics that the Tathagata attains *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*,’ Subhuti, do not have this thought, ‘It is not because of the perfect characteristics that the Tathagata attains *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.’ If you have this thought, ‘One who develops the mind of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* says all *dharmas* are characterized by annihilation,’ do not have this thought. Why is this? One who develops the mind of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* does not say *dharmas* are characterized by annihilation.” ❀

須菩提。若菩薩以滿恒河沙等世界七寶。持用布施。若復有人。知一切法無我。得成於忍。此菩薩勝前菩薩所得功德。須菩提。以諸菩薩不受福德故。須菩提白佛言。世尊。云何菩薩不受福德。須菩提。菩薩所作福德。不應貪著。是故說不受福德。❀

須菩提。若有人言。如來若來若去。若坐若臥。是人不解我所說義。何以故。如來者。無所從來。亦無所去。故名如來。❀

28.

“Subhuti, if a bodhisattva filled as many *trichiliocosms* as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River with the seven treasures and used them to practice giving, and if, however, there is someone who knows all *dharmas* are selfless, achieving forbearance, this bodhisattva surpasses the merit obtained by the aforementioned bodhisattva.”

“Subhuti, this is because all bodhisattvas do not receive rewards.”

Subhuti addressed the Buddha saying, “World-Honored One, why do you say bodhisattvas do not receive rewards?”

“Subhuti, the rewards bodhisattvas earn should not be desired. For this reason it is said they do not receive rewards.” ❀

29.

“Subhuti, if there is someone who says the Tathagata either comes or goes, or sits or lies down, this person does not understand the meaning of what I say. Why is this? The Tathagata has nowhere to come from and nowhere to go, therefore he is called the Tathagata.” ❀

須菩提。若善男子善女人。以三千大千世界碎為微塵。於意云何。是微塵眾寧為多不。甚多。世尊。何以故。若是微塵眾實有者。佛則不說是微塵眾。所以者何。佛說微塵眾。則非微塵眾。是名微塵眾。世尊。如來所說三千大千世界。則非世界。是名世界。何以故。若世界實有。則是一合相。如來說一合相。則非一合相。是名一合相。須菩提。一合相者。則是不可說。但凡夫之人貪著其事。

“Subhuti, if virtuous men and women were to grind a great *trichiliocosm* into minute particles, what does your mind say? This assemblage of minute particles would be many, would it not?”

“Extremely many, World-Honored One. Why is this? If this assemblage of minute particles was really existent, then the Buddha would not have spoken of an assemblage of minute particles. How is this? The Buddha says an assemblage of minute particles is not an assemblage of minute particles, so it is called an assemblage of minute particles.”

“World-Honored One, the Tathagata has said a great *trichiliocosm* is not a great *trichiliocosm*, so it is called a great *trichiliocosm*. Why is this? If a great *trichiliocosm* was really existent, then it would be a unified entity. The Tathagata says a unified entity is not a unified entity, so it is called a unified entity.”

“Subhuti, a unified entity cannot be spoken of. Only ordinary people are attached to this matter.” ❀

須菩提。若人言。佛說我見人見眾生見壽者見。須菩提。於意云何。是人解我所說義不。世尊。是人不解。如來所說義。何以故。世尊。說我見人見眾生見壽者見。即非我見人見眾生見壽者見。是名我見人見眾生見壽者見。須菩提。發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心者。於一切法。應如是知。如是見。如是信解。不生法相。須菩提。所言法相者。如來說即非法相。是名法相。

31.

“Subhuti, if someone says the Buddha has spoken of the view of a self, an individual, sentient beings or lifespan, Subhuti, what does your mind say? This person understands the meaning of what I have said, do they not?”

“World-Honored One, this person does not understand the meaning of what the Tathagata has said. Why is this? The World-Honored One says the view of a self, an individual, sentient beings or lifespan is not the view of a self, an individual, sentient beings or lifespan, so it is called the view of a self, an individual, sentient beings or lifespan.”

“Subhuti, those who develop the mind of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* should regard all *dharmas* by knowing like this, seeing like this, believing and understanding like this, without giving rise to a conception of *dharmas*.”

“Subhuti, what is said to be a conception of *dharmas*, the Tathagata says, is not a conception of *dharmas*, so it is called a conception of *dharmas*.” ❀

須菩提。若有人以滿無量阿僧祇世界七寶。持用布施。若有善男子善女人。發菩薩心者。持於此經。乃至四句偈等。受持讀誦。為人演說。其福勝彼。云何為人演說。不取於相。如如不動。何以故。

一切有為法 如夢幻泡影
如露亦如電 應作如是觀

佛說是經已。長老須菩提。及諸比丘比丘尼。

32.

“Subhuti, if there is someone who fills immeasurable *asamkhya* worlds with the seven treasures and uses them to practice giving, and if there are virtuous men and women who develop the mind of a bodhisattva and take even just four lines of verse from this sutra, receiving, retaining, reading and reciting them, and expounding them to others, their rewards will surpass those.”

“How would you say they expound it to others?”

“By not holding on to appearances, immovable like thusness. Why is this?”

All conditioned *dharma*s

Are like a dream, an illusion, a bubble, a shadow

Like dew and like lightning

Thus they should be perceived

After the Buddha had spoken this sutra, the Elder Subhuti with all the *bhiksus*, *bhiksunis*...

優婆塞優婆夷。一切世間天人阿修羅。聞佛
所說。皆大歡喜。信受奉行。

金剛般若波羅蜜經

...*upasakas, upasikas*, and the *devas*, humans and *asuras* of all worldly realms heard what the Buddha had said and were all greatly pleased; believing, receiving, honoring and practicing it. ❀

The Vajra Prajnaparamita Sutra



SUTRA INTRODUCTION



THE VAJRA PRAJNAPARAMITA SUTRA

This translation of the *Vajra Prajnaparamita Sutra*¹ was made from a scroll discovered in the “secret library” (Cave no. 17) in the grottoes of the Thousand Buddhas near Dunhuang (敦煌) by Hungarian-born archaeologist Sir Marc Aurel Stein (1862~1943) in March 1907. One of the main reasons we have chosen to translate this particular version of the *Vajra Sutra* is for its historical importance as the world’s oldest dated printed book. The sutra was uncovered during Stein’s second expedition of the trans-Asian Silk Road in the westernmost regions of China while working for the British Government.² The scroll, which is made from seven strips of dyed yellow paper, is approximately 10½ inches wide and 17 feet long, and bears the following colophon inscription: [The] *Fifteenth day of the fourth moon in the ninth year of Xiantong, by Wang Jie for {lacuna} parents,*

1 金剛般若波羅蜜經, more commonly known as the *Diamond Sutra*.

2 See British Library manuscript Or. 8210.

*reverently produced for universal distribution.*³ This date corresponds to a full moon on May 11, 868 AD, in the Gregorian calendar. Although examples of Chinese block printing exist from over a century earlier, the *Vajra Sutra* scroll is unique for having the earliest reliable date of any other known manuscript, and it would take over six hundred years before the practice of printing became known in Europe.

The cave containing the scroll, and over 40,000 other paper manuscripts and printed documents, had been sealed and hidden since about 1000 CE, supposedly to protect its contents from an invading Tangut kingdom to the north. The cave was first exhumed in June 1900 by the self-proclaimed abbot of Dunhuang, an itinerant Daoist monk named Wang Yuanlu (王圓籙). Stein acquired a total of twenty-four cases of manuscripts and five boxes of paintings, embroideries and art relics from Wang for a mere 130 British pounds (approx. 633 USD at the time). He returned to London and brought his find, including the *Vajra Sutra* scroll, to the British Museum Library, where it is still being held

3 咸通九年四月十五日王玠爲[]二親敬造普施

today. Expressing their bitter sentiment over these events half a century later, the National Library of Peking issued a statement in 1961 saying: “This famous scroll was stolen over fifty years ago by the Englishman Ssu-t’an-yin (斯坦因, Stein) which causes people to gnash their teeth in bitter hatred.”

The text printed on the scroll is a Chinese translation of a Sanskrit text called the *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra* (or *Vajra Cutter Prajnaparamita Sutra*) and, with the exception of a few minor differences, matches the version authored by the Central Asian translator savant Kumarajiva (鳩摩羅什, 344~413 CE) in 402 CE.⁴ Kumarajiva was the first to translate this sutra into Chinese and his work is the oldest known record of the text in any language. Other manuscripts of the *Vajra Sutra* discovered in Pakistan’s northern territories around Gilgit in 1931 date from the late fifth or early sixth century, attesting to the Indic origins of the sutra,

⁴ See *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (hereafter abbreviated as *T*), ed. Takakusu Junjirō, Watanabe Kaigyoku, and Ono Gemmyō, 100 vols. (Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924~1935); vol 8, no. 235.

yet it remains uncertain from what original text Kumarajiva made his translation.

The sutra belongs to a genre of Buddhist literature that began to appear predominantly in the northern regions of the Indus Valley between 100 BCE and 100 CE. Although produced considerably late, these sutras present themselves as records of the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama (c. 5th- 6th century BCE), referred to as the Buddha after his enlightenment. According to a Chinese tradition, the Buddha spent 22 of his 45 years as an itinerant preacher discoursing on *prajna* (般若), the highest form of wisdom attained by enlightened beings, and the means to its perfection (*paramita* 波羅蜜). In Sanskrit these sutras are typically measured by their number of *slokas*, lines of metered verse in 32 syllables. The largest existent *prajñā* sutra is in 100,000 *slokas*, with other versions ranging in length from 25,000 *slokas* to one of the smallest sutras in 14 *slokas*, known as the *Heart Sutra*. The Sanskrit version of the *Vajra Sutra* consists of 300 *slokas* and may represent one of the more original forms of this type of sutra given its incisive

presentation of *prajnaparamita* topics.

In English the sutra is more commonly known as the *Diamond Sutra*, a precedent set by the first English translation of the sutra done by Reverend Samuel Beal (1825~89) in 1865.⁵ This title comes from the misleading translation of the Sanskrit word *vajra* (金剛) as “diamond,” which Edward Conze, the foremost Western scholar of *prajna* sutras, has called an “unwarranted assumption.”⁶ *Vajra* originally referred to the lightning that evolved from the centrifugal energy of the thunderbolt-like weapon held by the lord of weather and war Indra, one of the oldest gods in the classical India pantheon.⁷ Sakra-devanam Indra (帝釋尊天) once smote enemies with his vajra before the Buddhist tradition incorporated him as a benign heavenly being, who often appears in sutras discoursing with the Buddha. The power

5 See Translation Catalogue, Beal, S. “Vajracchediká, the ‘Kin Kong King’, or Diamond Súra”.

6 See Conze, E. *Perfect Wisdom: The Short Prajñāpāramitā Texts*. (London: Luzac & Co. Ltd, 1973). p. ii.

7 See “Vajra” in M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas Publishers, 2002).

and indestructibility of Indra's weapon came to represent enlightenment and non-duality, while the *vajra* was symbolized by a multi-pronged metal object held by buddhas and bodhisattvas. Many Buddhist traditions have highly developed systems of thought based on the understanding that *vajra* is the very substance of enlightenment, not simply a "diamond", and the Chinese characters indicate that *vajra* is some type of adamant metal, not a precious gem.⁸

In addition to being the world's oldest dated printed book, the *Vajra Sutra* scroll is also distinguished by its adorning frontispiece, an image of the assembly and circumstances for the Buddha to speak the sutra. Starting in the lower left-hand corner of the piece, there is the Elder Subhuti, one of the Buddha's ten chief disciples and sole interlocutor in the text. He is depicted with his right shoulder bare and his right knee on the ground, revering the Buddha who is seated behind an altar, surrounded by a host of bodhisattvas,

⁸ Today, however, the modern Chinese lexicon uses 金剛石 for diamond, and does not necessarily have any Buddhist import.

bhiksus, celestial beings, and royal donors. The background is a mango grove donated to the Buddha and his followers by a wealthy merchant from the city of Sravasti named Anathapindika, an honorific title meaning “giver to the needy”. He purchased the park from Prince Jeta, son of the ruler of Kosala region King Prasenajit, who sold it to Anathapindika for the amount of gold it took to physically cover the land. According to the sutras, the Buddha preached more often in Sravasti than in any other location, and this location is well known for the miracles he performed there. Although a minor figure in the earlier Pali sutras, Subhuti is closely associated with the Mahayana discourses on *prajna*, and has a special connection with Sravasti as he was Anathapindika’s younger brother, and became a *bhikṣu* the day Jeta’s Grove was given to the Buddha.⁹

During the Liang Dynasty (梁朝 502~557 CE) Buddhism was heavily supported by Emperor Wu

⁹ See *Aranavibhanga Sutta*. Tr. Bhikkhu Ñānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi in *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*, no. 130 (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), p. 1345, n. 1263.

(武帝 r. 502~549), and his eldest son Zhaoming (昭明 499~529 CE) was particularly devoted to Kumarajiva's version of the *Vajra Sutra*. Prince Zhaoming is famed for having divided the Chinese text into thirty-two sections and ascribing them titles, and his divisions have since become the standard way to read the text, even in Sanskrit. Although the Dunhuang scroll has numerous line breaks that correspond to these divisions, there are no chapter headings and three of its sections differ from the Prince's chapters.¹⁰ The significance of the number thirty-two is debatable. In India, prior to the time of the Buddha, super-human beings were said to possess thirty-two distinguishing bodily characteristics or marks called *lakṣaṇa* (相), an idea heavily discussed throughout the sutra. An early Pali sutra lists them as being attributes by which the Buddha can be recognized, and they

¹⁰ The *Vajra Sutra* scroll has no line break between the traditional first and second chapter, where Subhuti begins to speak, and there are two atypical breaks in the fourteenth chapter and the twenty-first chapter. However, to maintain consistent with other translations, we have placed small dharma wheels in both the Chinese and English texts marking the traditional 32 chapter divisions.

have since become an integral part of Buddhist faith.¹¹ The *Vajra Sutra*, however, claims that the Buddha, in reality, cannot be seen by these bodily appearances, but rather, the sutra itself is, in essence, the present body of the Buddha. Hence, most commentators interpret the total number of chapters as the real thirty-two *lakṣana* of the Buddha.

The sutra begins with a brief introductory chapter describing the location and occasion for the sutra, then the discourse begins with Subhuti asking the Buddha a two-part question concerning *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, or supreme, perfect enlightenment. According to Mahayana traditions, the Buddha initially taught the means for the realization of *nirvana*, the cutting off of the karmic fetters that cause sentient beings to suffer rebirth lifetime after lifetime. Those that achieve this goal are known as *arahats*, represented in the *Vajra Sutra* by Subhuti. In later Buddhist thought, however, the ideal form of practice is

11 See *Lakkhana Sutta*. Tr. Maurice Walshe in *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, no. 30 (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995).

embodied in bodhisattvas, beings bound for full buddhahood, and their development of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*. Subhuti's asks the Buddha on their behalf, what they should rely on and how they should master their minds. The Chinese character here translated as 'rely' (住) is more commonly translated as 'abide,' literally meaning to stop or rest. In the Buddhist context, however, the word indicates a mental attachment or hang-up rather than a physical dwelling. Answering the second part of Subhuti's question first, the Buddha states for the first time a refrain that runs throughout the sutra; that bodhisattvas, in vowing to liberate all sentient beings from suffering, should not have the conception of a self, individual, sentient being, or lifespan (我相, 人相, 眾生相, 壽者相).¹²

12 Our translation 'conception' is informed by later Chinese versions of the *Vajra Sutra* that replace 相 with 想, which is closer to the Sanskrit versions of the sutra that have *samjna*, a mental perception not a physical characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*). One of the difficulties in translating Kumārajīva's version of the *Vajra Sutra* is his use of 相 for both *samjna* and *lakṣaṇa* throughout the text, which has led previous English translators to interpret the self, individual, sentient being and lifespan as qualities the bodhisattva should be without, rather than mental

The paradox of saving sentient beings while not holding the concept of sentient beings pertains to the Buddhist understanding of metempsychosis, or reincarnation, one of the principle themes of the *Vajra Sutra*. Unlike most other systems of Indian thought, in Buddhism, being trapped in the constant round of rebirth (Skt. *samsara*) is not rooted in karma, or action, but rather ignorance of the fact that the sentient subject is not one single entity with an essential Self or Soul that transmigrates. According to some of the earliest schools of Buddhist thinking, all phenomena, both mental and physical, can be broken down into fundamental principles, or truths, called *dharmas*, and it is the misunderstanding of their coming together and falling apart that leads to rebirth. For the later schools of the Mahayana tradition, however, not only is the Self devoid of any real, objective existence, so are the very *dharmas* that combine to create the illusion of a Self. Although it never explicitly mentions the concept ‘emptiness,’ as a *prajnaparamita* sutra, the text assumes this fundamental doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism, that

conceptions they should overcome.

all things are empty of any independent, substantial or eternal existence. The Buddha, therefore, answers the first part of Subhuti's question by saying bodhisattvas should master their minds by not relying on appearances (不住於相). Which is to say, they should not rely on the perceived qualities or attributes of objects as distinct objects to understand the world. In fact, the sutra goes on to say that the minds of bodhisattvas should not rely on anything in the development of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.

The Chan Buddhist tradition (禪宗) holds that the 6th Patriarch Huineng (慧能 638-713 CE) became enlightened just by hearing a few words about non-reliance read aloud from the tenth section of the sutra. Revered by Chan practitioners as the most expedient of the Buddha's sutras, the *Vajra Sutra* contains numerous enigmatic and perplexing statements that would later become part of the Zen koan tradition. Perhaps one of the most important points for understanding the overall message of the sutra is the often repeated formula that what is "X" is not "X," so it is called "X." For example, in the

thirteenth chapter the Buddha asks Subhuti about all the minute particles that constitute a world, to which Subhuti replies that they are many. The Buddha responds by explaining to him that minute particles are not minute particles, so they are called minute particles. In fact, a world is not a world, so it is called a world. Throughout the text the Buddha applies this cryptic reasoning to almost every topic addressed in the sutra, including the Buddha's very own teachings. There have been innumerable interpretations of this mysterious syllogism but, given the nature of the discourse, it would seem to be pointing to the underlying emptiness of, what are perceived to be, unified entities, and the conventional names by which they are labeled.

This enlightened understanding of the phenomenal world as empty (Skt. *sunyata*) is called *prajna*, and, along with the practice of five other *paramitas*, is equivalent to *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*. *Paramita* is a Sanskrit word usually translated as 'perfection,' but in a verbal sense, like the Chinese translation 度, means to 'ferry over,' indicating the deliverance from suffering. Although larger

versions of the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* deal extensively with all six *paramitas*, the *Vajra Sutra* focuses mainly on two, *prajna* and *dana* (布施), or giving. The Buddha interrogates *Subhuti's* mind throughout the sutra with hyperbolic scenarios of giving and its potential reward, or merit. Although Sanskrit versions of the *Vajracchedika Sutra* use only one term to discuss merit (*punya*), Kumarajiva's Chinese translation uses two terms, 福德 and 功德, which most previous English translations have assumed to be interchangeable concepts. Upon closer examination, however, particularly of the fourteenth and twenty-eighth chapters, it appears that the Kumarjiva version makes a distinction between this-worldly benefits (福德, translated here as 'rewards'), which result from the giving of physical objects (such as the seven treasures, etc.), and spiritual boons (功德, translated here as 'merit'), which result from religious practice (such as upholding, chanting and understanding the sutra). This emphasis on giving extends to the often-criticized awareness the sutra has of itself as a text, rather than the record of an oral transmission, and the constant praise for

reproducing and distributing it. These two qualities are found in most Mahayana scriptures, and may explain, at least in part, the creation of the *Vajra Sutra* scroll in 868.

By the end of the Tang Dynasty (唐代 618~907 CE), as Wang Jie was preparing the woodblocks for his production of the *Vajra Prajnaparamita Sutra*, five other translations of the sutra had been made from Sanskrit. Yet, even after 500 years, Kumarjiva's version had remained the most popular, and has been one of the most influential sutras on the development of Chinese Buddhism. Buddhism during the Tang was heavily influenced by tantric practices of ritual magic and protection. As a result, the *Vajra Sutra* scroll has a few textual additions that are not considered parts of the actual sutra. Immediately following the frontispiece there is a prescribed incantation, or mantra (真言) which reads, "Anyone wishing to read this sutra, first recite the mantra for purifying verbal karma {lacuna} times: *Sri Sri Mahasri Susri Svaha*."¹³

¹³ 凡欲讀經先念淨口業真言 []遍: 修唎 修唎 摩訶修唎 修修唎 娑婆訶. The above translation provides a tentative back-translation of the Sanskrit phonetics from the Chinese

After purifying one's voice in preparation to chant the sutra, the practitioner would then request protection from eight vajra guardians. The text reads: "We respectfully receive and invite: Dispelling Calamity Vajra, Averting Poison Vajra, Yellow Procuring Favors Vajra, White Purifying Water Vajra, Crimson Sounds Vajra, Settling and Dispelling Suffering Vajra, Purple Sage Vajra, Great Spirit Vajra."¹⁴ And finally, at the end of the sutra scroll, just before the colophon, there is a concluding mantra which reads: *Namo Bhagavati Prajnaparamitayai Om Rddhi Sri Srota Vijaya Vijaya Svaha*.¹⁵

transliteration.

14 奉請除災金剛，奉請辟毒金剛，奉請黃隨求金剛，奉請白淨水金剛，奉請赤聲金剛，奉請定除厄金剛，奉請紫賢金剛，奉請大神金剛。

15 那謨婆伽 跋帝 鉢羅若 鉢羅蜜多曳 唵 伊哩帝 伊失哩 式噓馱 毗舍耶 毗舍耶 娑婆訶。 We would like to give special thanks to Venerable Huifeng for providing the above two tentative back-translations of the Sanskrit mantras.



TRANSLATION CATALOGUE



The following is a list of books and journals that contain versions of the *Vajra Sutra* in Chinese or in English translation.

CHINESE VERSIONS

Taishō no. 235. *Vajra Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* 金剛般若波羅蜜經. Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什, CE 402.

T no. 236. *Vajra Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* 金剛般若波羅蜜經. Bodhiruci 菩提流支, CE 509.

T no. 237. *Vajra Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* 金剛般若波羅蜜經. Paramārtha 真諦, CE 562.

T no. 238. *Vajra Cutter Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* 金剛能斷般若波羅蜜經. Dharmagupta 達摩笈多, CE 605.

T no. 220, 7:980a. *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Ninth Gathering, Vajra Cutter Section* 大般若波羅蜜多經 第九會 能斷金剛分. Xuanzang 玄奘, CE 648.

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GLOSSARY



The entries in this glossary fall under two categories: 1) foreign terms and technical concepts that appear in the body of the text and 2) generalized topics that are inferred in the text and which have thematic importance to the reading of the sutra.

All entries that are covered by the first category are parenthetically followed by their commonly romanized Sanskrit form, with diacritical marks if necessary, and by the appropriate Chinese character(s) as they are exactly found in the text. The Sanskrit term provided is the most typical equivalent of the Chinese word found in the text.

Since entries covered by the second category are topical and are not discussed in the text directly, the Sanskrit and Chinese equivalents are not included.

When possible we have also provided other common translations of terms at the end of some entries.

anagamin (*anāgāmin* 阿那含): The third stage on the fourfold path to enlightenment according to early Buddhist traditions. One who attains this level will no longer be reborn in the human realm, but will be reborn in the higher heavens to attain enlightenment. Other translations: “Non-returner”.

annihilation (*uccheda* 斷滅相): The extreme philosophical position that all phenomena are eventually utterly and totally destroyed. This view is denied in Mahayana Buddhism for its causal and moral implications (such as the negation of rebirth) and is akin to a view of nihilism.

anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (*anuttarā-samyak-sambodhi* 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提): A term that refers to the complete enlightenment of a buddha. It is considered to be the greatest class of awakening and is characterized by the possession of omniscience and the ten powers. Other translations: “supreme correct enlightenment” or “unexcelled perfect enlightenment”.

appearances (*lakṣaṇa* 相): The characteristic marks or traits of phenomena, such as color, shape and size, by which objects are discriminated from one another. *Laksana* originally referred to thirty-two characteristics

by which a Buddha can be recognized but came to have more philosophical implications, especially in Yogacara Buddhism. In western philosophical logic *lakṣana* are similar to accidents.

aranya (*araṇya* 阿蘭那): This term literally means “forest”, but is used to connote a secluded and quiet place for practice. Traditionally, these areas should not be too far away from, or too close to, highly populated urban areas. Other translations: “forest”.

arhat (*arhat* 阿羅漢): The final stage on the fourfold path to enlightenment according to early Buddhist traditions. One who attains this level has eradicated all of their defilements and has become enlightened. They are distinguished from buddhas by the fact that buddhas attain enlightenment solely through their own efforts, while an arhat practices the teachings of another. Other translations: “Worthy One”, “Saint”.

asamkhyā (*asamkhyā* 阿僧祇): A term generally used to represent an indefinitely large number. In some sources it has been defined as equaling 10^{59} . Other translations: “incalculable”.

asura (*asura* 阿修羅): A semi-divine being who resides

just below the devas on the slopes of Mt. Sumeru. They are often characterized as jealous demigods in constant conflict with the heavenly devas. Other translations: “titan”, “demon”.

bhikṣu (*bhikṣu* 比丘): A fully ordained male member of the Buddhist monastic community. Other translations: “monk”, “mendicant”.

bhikṣuṇī (*bhikṣuṇī* 比丘尼): A fully ordained female member of the Buddhist monastic community. Other translations: “nun”.

bodhisattva (*bodhisattva* 菩薩): A title given to a being who compassionately vows to liberate all sentient beings from suffering and help free them from the cycle of rebirth. Originally this term was exclusively used to describe the Buddha in his previous lives before his enlightenment, but in the Mahayana tradition this term denotes anyone who aspires to attain buddhahood. The term “bodhisattva” is traditionally glossed as meaning “enlightenment being”.

buddha (*buddha* 佛): A title meaning “Awakened One” used for a being who has perceived the true nature of all phenomena, has overcome all suffering, and who

compassionately teaches these insights to others. It is one of the ten titles of a fully enlightened being. When capitalized and preceded by definite article “the” the term refers to the historical figure Siddhartha Gautama, and when it is pluralized or not capitalized it refers to anyone in the general class of fully enlightened beings.

Buddha Eye (*buddha-cakṣus* 佛眼): See **five eyes**.

Buddha Land (*buddha-kṣetra* 佛土): A world in which a buddha has assumed the responsibility of liberating sentient beings through his teachings. In Mahayana cosmologies there are infinite numbers of Buddha Lands which vary in their degrees of perfection or purity. Other translations: “Buddha field”, “Buddhaverse”.

causes and conditions (*hetu-pratyāya* 因緣): The antecedent grounds from which all phenomena arise. All phenomena based on causes and conditions are ultimately transitory and impermanent. Causes generally refer to the primary grounds which directly effect results, while conditions generally refer to the secondary or proximate grounds which indirectly effect results.

conceptions (*samjñā* 相): The discriminatory mode of thought which perceives phenomena as existing independent of other phenomena.

deva (*deva* 天): An inhabitant of the heavens that are located on or above Mt. Sumeru. Any sentient being with the requisite amount of merit can be reborn as a deva. Life in the heavenly realms is generally considered to be utopian, however it is also transient, as all devas are mortal and subject to rebirth. Other translations: “god”, “deity”.

dharma (*dharma* 法): 1. A constituent element of the phenomenal world. Dharmas comprise both the physical world as well as the internal psychological processes of a subject. Other translations: “phenomena” or “thing”. 2. A thought or idea, the sensory object of mental perception. Other translations: “mind-object”. 3. The Dharma refers to the body of Buddhist teachings. Other translations: “Truth” or “Law”.

Dharma Eye (*dharma-cakṣus* 法眼): See **five eyes**.

Dipamkara (*Dīpaṃkara* 然燈): According to Pali sources Dipamkara was the first buddha in a series of twenty four ancient buddhas. In a previous life,

Sakyamuni (then known as the ascetic Sumedha) made a vow to attain complete enlightenment as a Buddha under Dipamkara, who then verified the result with his powers of foresight. The name Dipamkara literally translates into “Lamp Lighter”.

Divine Eye (*divya-cakṣus* 天眼): See **five eyes**.

evil paths (*durgati* 惡道): The three realms of rebirth that are considered to be the most despised and unfortunate, namely being reborn as a hell being, hungry ghost or animal.

forebearance (*kṣānti* 忍辱): An integral Buddhist virtue which is considered instrumental in overcoming hatred. In early Buddhist traditions the practice was used to ultimately overcome bodily harm. In the Mahayana tradition forbearance is typically considered the third of the paramitas, and its ultimate practice is thought to be an intellectual flexibility for understanding the profundity of the Dharma. Other translations: “tolerance”, “patience”, “acceptance”, “receptivity”.

five eyes: Five classifications of eyes or vision that are possessed or developed by sentient beings. Physical eyes are typically considered the bodily eyes of human

beings; the Divine Eye is that of the devas, which can see sentient beings in all realms of rebirth; the Wisdom Eye is that of Hinayana practitioners, which perceives emptiness; the Dharma Eye is that of bodhisattvas, which see the minds of sentient being and the proper teaching for them; and the Buddha Eye is that of buddhas, which is omniscient. The level of the Buddha Eye includes all of the previous classes.

giving (*dāna* 布施): An integral Buddhist virtue which is considered instrumental in overcoming greed. It is considered a great source for merit and, according to some early Buddhist traditions, the amount of merit gained was proportional to the difficulty of the act of giving. In the Mahayana tradition giving is typically considered the first of the *paramitas*, and its ultimate practice includes using the insight of emptiness and the dissolution of the conception of a benefactor, beneficiary, and the act of giving itself. Other translations: “charity”, “generosity”.

Great Vehicle (*mahāyāna* 大乘): A major movement in Buddhist history that offered reinterpretations of Buddhist doctrine in an entirely new body of literature and sutras. Philosophically the movement is distinguished by its emphasis on the notion of emptiness,

and practically it is distinguished by its emphasis on compassion.

Jetavana Anathapindika Park (Jeta-vana anathapindika-ārāma 祇樹給孤獨園): A monastic compound located on the outskirts of Sravasti where the Buddha was traditionally said to have spent nineteen rain retreats. The park was donated to the Buddhist monastic community by a wealthy merchant named Sudatta, who was more commonly known as Anathapindika, which means “one who gives to the needy”. The land was originally owned by the royal prince, Jeta, who agreed to sell the land for the amount of gold coins that were required to cover the ground of the entire park. When Anathapindika initially ran out of gold and gave instructions for more to be carted in, Jeta was moved by Anathapindika’s devotion to the Buddha and freely donated the uncovered patch of land. Together they built a meeting hall, a dining hall, residential halls, walkways, wells, and surrounded the park with a barrier wall. To honor the efforts of both Jeta and Anathapindika, texts refer to the park using both of their names. This site was excavated in 1863 by the English archaeologist Alexander Cunningham, and is located in modern day Saheth, India.

kalpa (*kalpa* 劫): An extremely vast measurement of time used in ancient India. The length of time of a single kalpa is considered to be of an almost inconceivable duration. Other translations: “eon”.

karmic offenses (*asubani karma* 罪業): The negative results of unvirtuous physical, verbal, or mental action. Other translations: “sin”.

King Kali (Kali-rāja 歌利王): The antagonistic character in a well-known story about one of the previous lives of the Buddha. In the story King Kali travels into the forest with his wives, consorts and dancing girls seeking relaxation. After the revelries the king tires and falls asleep while his female companions wander off to explore the beauty of the forest. They meet an ascetic who begins instructing them on ways to dispel suffering. When the king awakens he is enraged to find that all of his female companions have left him and marches into the forest to find them. Once he sees that they have all sat down to listen to the teaching of the ascetic, the king draws his sword and brutally attacks him. He severs each of the ascetic’s limbs, until he eventually decapitates him. According to the story, this ascetic figure was the Buddha in a previous life.

Kumarajiva (Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什): (343-413) A famed Buddhist monk who hailed from the Central Asian kingdom of Kucha and traveled to China to become one of the “Four Great Translators” of Chinese Buddhism. He arrived in the capital of Chang’an 長安 in 401 and immediately headed a translation bureau in producing translations of Buddhist texts in Chinese. His translations are considered to be composed in the most elegant prose and have significantly impacted the history of Buddhism in China.

Lesser Dharma (小法): A pejorative term used for the teachings followed by non-Mahayana Buddhist practitioners, which is overzealously characterized as being uncompassionate and egotistical. Lesser dharma refers to the philosophical belief in the substantial existence of dharmas as the building blocks of reality. It is equivalent to the term Hinayana, or “small vehicle”.

mahasattva (*mahāsattva* 摩訶薩): A title given to bodhisattvas that means “great being”. There also is some evidence to indicate that mahasattva might be a distinct class of bodhisattva.

nature (*svabhāva* 性): The ultimately illusory quality of a phenomenon which seemingly allows it to exist

independently from other phenomena. The Sanskrit term *svabhava* can be rendered as “self-being” or “intrinsic nature”, and illustrates how phenomena can be falsely regarded as not being caused or conditioned by other factors. Mahayana contends that all phenomena lack this self-created nature and are therefore conditionally arisen.

nayuta (*nayuta* 那由他): An indefinitely large number. Other translations: “myriad”.

nirvana without remainder (*parinirvāṇa* 無餘涅槃): The highest form of nirvana, which constitutes the total extinction of residual karmic elements, i.e. the five skandhas. This was the final state of enlightenment attained by the Buddha upon his death, in contrast with the enlightenment attained at Bodhgaya under the Bodhi Tree, which was considered to be nirvana with remainder.

pagoda (*stūpa* 塔; 塔廟): Originally a monument in India (called a stupa) that was built to commemorate dead kings, and which was eventually used to house the relics of the Buddha or other famous Buddhist practitioners. This Indian structure eventually combined with indigenous Chinese architectural forms and took on

the tower-like form of a pagoda.

paramita (*pāramitā* 波羅蜜): The ultimate realization and mastery of the practice of a particular Buddhist virtue or quality. In the Mahayana tradition a list of six paramitas is typically given, of which two are directly discussed in this text, giving and forbearance, and a third is tacitly understood, wisdom. The other three include morality, determination, and concentration. Other translations: “perfection”.

perfectly formed body (具足色身): See **thirty-two characteristics**.

physical eyes (*māṃṣa-cakṣus* 肉眼): See **five eyes**.

prajnaparamita (*prajñāpāramitā* 般若波羅蜜): The practice of the highest form of Buddhist wisdom that is fully actualized by bodhisattvas. This wisdom (*prajna*) denotes the specific insight into phenomenal reality that results in the direct realization of emptiness. It is one of the six perfections (*paramita*) that comprise the Mahayana Bodhisattva path. Other translations: “perfection of wisdom”, “perfection of insight”, or “transcendental wisdom”.

Prajnaparamita Sutra (*prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* 般若波羅蜜經): A particular genre of Buddhist literature that was mainly composed between the first century BCE and first century CE in India. Its content focuses on the ideal of the bodhisattva, and the ultimate realization of wisdom which reveals that all phenomena are empty of inherent and eternal existence. The seemingly paradoxical situation that arises out of these doctrines is the fact that a bodhisattva, being an empty phenomena, does not ultimately exist.

reality (*bhūta-samjñā* 實相): The apparent state of all phenomena which is not mediated by ignorance or delusion.

sakrdagamin (*sakrdāgāmin* 斯陀含): The second stage on the fourfold path to enlightenment according to early Buddhist traditions. One who attains this level will only have one more rebirth in the human realm before enlightenment. Other translations: “Once-returner”.

Sakyamuni (*Śākyamuni* 釋迦牟尼): A title given to Siddhartha Gautama who was born among the Sakya tribe. The title literally means “Sage of the Sakyas”. Mahayana texts typically use this title to distinguish the historical Buddha from the numerous other buddhas that

proliferate the cosmos.

samadhi (*samādhi* 三昧): A deep state of meditative concentration and absorption which is the result of continued focus upon a single object. Mahayana texts mention a variety of samadhis that each have their own particular name and associated qualities. Other translations: “meditation”, “trance”, “deep concentration”.

seven treasures (*sapta-ratna* 七寶): Seven precious substances that are valued because of their scarcity and are generally ascribed no symbolic importance. They are gold, silver, lapis lazuli, agate and carnelian, and depending on the source also include crystal, coral, rubies (red pearls), or nacre.

six sensory objects: The six kinds of stimuli perceived by the six sensory organs. The eye perceives sights 色, the ear perceives sounds 聲, the nose perceives scents 香, the tongue perceives tastes 味, the body perceives touch 觸, and the mind perceives thoughts 法.

Sravasti (Sṛāvastī 舍衛國): Śravasti was the capital city of the ancient northern Indian kingdom of Kosala located in modern day Uttar Pradesh. To distinguish it

from a southern Indian kingdom that was also called Kosala, this northern Indian state was sometimes referenced by its capital city, thus being called the Kingdom of Sravasti. Prasenajit, the ruler of this kingdom, was a devoted follower and friend of the Buddha.

srotāpanna (*śrotāpanna* 須陀洹): The first stage on the fourfold path to enlightenment according to early Buddhist traditions. One who attains this level has assured their future enlightenment within seven more rebirths, and will only be reborn as a human, asura, or deva. Other translations: “Stream-enterer”, “Stream-winner”.

Subhuti (Subhūti 須菩提): Traditionally distinguished as one of the ten main disciples of the Buddha. However, Subhuti did not take on a place of prominence in early Buddhist scriptures. He was originally declared to be chief among the disciples who dwells in forests or remote places, and only became a central figure in Mahayana texts, particularly in early Prajnaparamita literature, where he was often the main interlocutor. He was only later distinguished as the disciple who was foremost in understanding emptiness.

suchness (*tathatā* 如): The true state of all phenomena as experienced by a Buddha. This mode is beyond all mental conceptualizations and discriminations.

Sumeru (Sumeru 須彌山): Considered to be the *axis mundi* of traditional Buddhist cosmology, the summit of Mount Sumeru (or Mount Meru) extends into the heavens and constitutes the highest geographical point of a world.

Supreme Vehicle (*agrayāna* 最上乘): See **Great Vehicle**.

sutra (*sūtra* 經): Scripture which traditionally preserves the discourses of the Buddha. The earliest dialogues of the Buddha were preserved orally, and it is commonly held that his teachings were not committed to writing until the first century BCE. With the advent of Mahayana Buddhism new sutras were circulated in Northern India and Central Asia.

Tathagata (*tathāgata* 如來): One of the ten epithets given to every fully enlightened being. The Sanskrit term is a fanciful combination of *tathā-āgata*, meaning “thus-come”, and *tathā-gata*, meaning “thus-gone”. This purposefully preserves an ambiguity in the meaning of

the term. However, the Chinese translation only captures one aspect of the play on words found in Sanskrit and can be translated as the “Thus Come One.”

thirty-two characteristics (*dvātriṃśad-vara-lakṣaṇa* 三十二相): The thirty-two marks that are possessed by all superhuman beings. Of those born with these marks, those who embark on a path of religious practice will become a fully enlightened buddha, while those who embark on a secular political career will become wheel-turning sage kings. The more famous marks include a prominent protrusion on the crown on the head, a whorl of white hair located between the eyebrows (often represented by a circle or jewel in iconography), and the depiction of Dharma wheels with one thousand spokes on the soles of the feet.

trichiliocosm (*trisahasra-mahāsahasra-lokadhātu* 三千大千世界): A term that typically designates a totality of one billion worlds, and symbolically represents the largest possible combination of worlds in Buddhist cosmology. It is believed that one thousand individual worlds constitute a “small world system”, and one thousand small world systems constitute a “medium world system”, and one thousand medium world systems constitute a “great world system”. The number

of individual worlds in a great world system is equal in number to a trichiliocosm, namely one billion (1000³). Other translations: “thousandfold great thousandfold world system”; “three thousand great thousand worlds.”

Tripitaka Master (三藏法師): Honorary title given to Buddhist monastics in China who mastered the teachings of the Buddha.

unconditioned dharma (*asaṃskṛta-dharma* 無為法): A category of phenomena that *do not* arise from causes and conditions. What constitutes being an unconditioned dharma varies from school to school, however nirvana and space are two traditional phenomena that are sometimes placed in this category.

unified entity (*piṇḍa-grāha* 一合相): Any composite phenomena that has the appearance of wholeness and indivisibility.

upasaka (*upāsaka* 優婆塞): A male lay Buddhist.

upasika (*upāsikā* 優婆夷): A female lay Buddhist.

wheel-turning sage king (*cakravartin* 轉輪聖王): A sovereign ruler who embodies the Buddhist political

ideal of the virtuous monarch who brings about peace and prosperity to his subjects. There are four hierarchical classes of wheel-turning sage kings that are distinguished by the type of metal used for the wheels of their chariots and their ability to move between the four main continents that constitute the Buddhist conception of a world. The historical Indian king, Asoka, who ruled the Mauryan kingdom in the third century BCE, is commonly referred to in Buddhist texts with this title.

wisdom eye (*prajñā-cakṣus* 慧眼): The third class of vision according to the Buddhist notion of the five eyes. This vision allows one to see phenomena as empty. See also **five eyes**.

world (*loka-dhātu* 世界): Term generally used to describe the greater structure of the Buddhist cosmos in which sentient beings are continuously reborn. In later Mahayana cosmologies there are an indefinite number of worlds, each with a similar structure: a central axis centered at Mt. Sumeru which is subsequently surrounded by a total of eight mountain ranges, seven oceans, four large continents, eight sub-continents, and celestial bodies such as the sun, moon, and stars. Other translations: “world sphere”, “world system”, “galaxy”.

World-Honored One (*bhagavat* 世尊): One of the ten epithets given to every fully enlightened being. It is used as a sign of respect and reverence toward the person being addressed. Other translations: “Lord”, “Master”, “Blessed One”.

worldly realm (*loka* 世間): The particular layer or dimension of the world where sentient beings have the possibility of being reborn. It does not necessarily connote the larger cosmic structures that are present in the Buddhist notion of a world, but rather points to the location where sentient beings actually live.

Yao Qin (姚秦): A short lived kingdom, more commonly referred to as the Later Qin 後秦, which lasted from 384-417 during the tumultuous period in northern China known as the Sixteen Kingdoms of the Five Barbarian Tribes. Yao Xing 姚興 (r. 393-415) was responsible for bringing Kumarajiva to the capital, allowing him begin his prodigious undertaking of translating Buddhist texts into Chinese.



EDITORIAL MESSAGE



With the growing popularity of Buddhism around the world, access to its doctrine through reliable translations of its scriptures is of utmost importance. Therefore, we have set as our pinnacle goal the production of a new standardized canon of Buddhist sutras in English. As scholars, teachers and students of Buddhism, we recognize that the most valuable resources for Buddhist texts are the exhaustive editions of the Chinese Buddhist canon, yet of the hundreds of sutras in Chinese, only a fraction have been reliably translated into the English language. We are aware of the efforts of other translation committees and translators involved in the effort to produce English translations of Buddhist texts. However, we feel our endeavor is unique in several important ways.

First, our focus is the production of not just one, but a complete series of translations of specifically Chinese Buddhist sutras using a consistent vocabulary for technical terms and foreign concepts. Throughout all our translations we will employ a standardized lexicon and methodology for translation, so that a term will be translated, or transliterated, in the same manner in every volume in this series. In this way, we hope to aid the

reader in comprehending the complexities of Buddhist doctrine, which often call upon a diverse array of technical jargon and conceptual constructs.

Next, we are committed to producing bilingual editions of each sutra with tools for studying the original Chinese text. By providing facing bilingual pages, we hope to encourage those students who are learning Chinese to compare our English translation with the original source text, thereby deepening their understanding of the translation process and of the content of the sutra. Our editions will also include a brief history of the particular sutra, an exhaustive glossary of foreign words and ideas, and a translation catalogue of other Chinese and English translations of the same text.

Finally, our method of translation provides a literal, yet fluid rendition of the Chinese text that tries to capture the experience of reading sutras in Chinese, while remaining as faithful as possible to the original text. By attempting to make the translation process more transparent, we aim to uncover the subtleties of the text that are easily lost when rendering a sutra from one language into another. Our translation board consists of a variety of experts on Buddhism from different areas and fields, and all our translations go through a series of

revisions and renditions before final printing to ensure their accuracy.

We inaugurate our series with translations of the *Heart Sutra* and *Diamond Sutra*, unquestionably two of the most popular sutras in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition. By establishing our formula mentioned above with these two sutras, we intend to move on to more obscure sutras that, for one reason or another, have been overlooked by previous translators.

Through the publication of these translations, we hope to allow a greater accessibility to Buddhist sutras, and circulate them to a much wider audience. We hope to appeal not only to the uninitiated novice, but also to the more accomplished student of Buddhist thought.



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Venerable Yifa has been a nun at Fo Guang Shan Monastery in Taiwan since 1979. She received a law degree from National Taiwan University, a M.A. in comparative philosophy from the University of Hawaii, and her Ph.D. in religious studies from Yale University in 1996. She was named one of “The Ten Outstanding Young Persons” in Taiwan in 1997, and was the recipient of the “Outstanding Women in Buddhism Award” in 2003 and the “Juliet Holister Award” in 2006. She was the Dean at Fo Guang Shan Buddhist College and the Provost at Hsi Lai University, Rosemead, California, as well as a visiting scholar at the University of California at Berkeley and Harvard University, a lecturer at Boston University, and a faculty member at National Sun Yat-Sen University in Taiwan. She taught at McGill University as the Numata visiting professor in the spring of 2005 and currently serves as the chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of the West in Los Angeles.

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Peter Matthew Romaskiewicz was born and raised in a small town near the Atlantic coastline of New Jersey. While attending Rutgers University he was captivated by the study of philosophy and world religions and was ultimately attracted to the richness of Buddhism and Chinese culture. He embarked on his study of literary Chinese at Columbia University in New York City, where he received his M.A. in Chinese Buddhism in 2005. His interests range from Buddhist ethics and linguistic philosophy and extend into art history and graphic design.

助印功德芳名

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小坂展生	小坂展慶	高橋正幸	高橋泰仁
高橋裕明	齊木清稔	尾田俊彥	宮下桂香
司徒敏堂	司徒正彬	司徒靜儒	榆井春菊
黃迦僂	李金玉	黃祥洲	李友成
黃美珠	褚芸烈	王張罔	王朝清
王秀純	王秀如	王興隆	曹嚴之
羅鳳蘭	游東隆	黃鈴惠	陳繼東
呂小燕	陳善也	釋心悌	釋心今
釋心瑞	釋心屬	釋妙澤	釋覺應
黃麗華	潘啟順	潘郭于	李翊綸
李翊嘉	李國麟	陳德安	洪百芬
陳世軒	陳芷薇	洪逸杰	王之豪
洪逸忠	洪余月嬌	Jose Orro	Kevin Orro
Michelle Orro	Rich Brawley	Alex	
Brawley			

(至2006年8月15日止)

