

Short Sutras of the Perfect Wisdom

Of the 40 or so Prajna Paramita sutras, many are shorter than 3,000 lines. There are versions of 2,500 lines, of 700, of 500 of 50 and also the “Perfection of Wisdom in a few Words and the Perfection of Wisdom in One Letter”. The most famous of these short sutras are the Diamond Sutra in 300 lines and the Heart Sutra in 25 lines.

* The 2,500 line Wisdom Sutra is called “the Questions of Suvikrantavikramin” and is in 7 Chapters. It begins with questions: “Because of what does one speak of the Perfection of Wisdom of the Bodhisattvas?” How does the Bodhisattva, the Great Being course in Perfect Wisdom?” etc. The text restates the doctrines of the Perfect Wisdom using considerable reasoning power.

< sample reading >

* The version in 700 lines contains a 3 way dialog with the Buddha, Manjusri and Saradvatiputra expounding unproduced dharmas.

“Are then the Buddhadharmas unsurpassed?” “They are unsurpassed (anuttara), O Lord . Because in them not even the least (anu) dharma is found or apprehended, the Buddhadharmas have not surpassed anything.”

- * The version in 500 lines is extant in Tibetan only.

“The Bodhisattva should, with regard to form, etc., fully know the Emptiness-concentration. When with regard to form, etc. he has apprehended the emptiness of non-existence and likewise the emptiness of existence and the emptiness of essential nature, then that one-pointedness of thought is the Emptiness-concentration.”
Likewise with regard to form, etc. one should fully know the Signless-concentration and the Wishless-concentration.

- * The version in 50 lines, also rendered from the Tibetan, repeats various stock phrases from the larger sutras.

“The Perfection of Wisdom is like unto space, because it is absolutely clear.”

- * The version in “a very few words” is a counterpart of the Heart Sutra, but is designed for the foolish common people and not, as the Heart Sutra, designed for the spiritually elite. Like the Heart Sutra, it contains a mantra, one more difficult than the gate gate mantra.

- * Perfect Wisdom and the 5 Bodhisattvas.
5 simple, unpretentious and brief sutras.

- * The Perfection of Wisdom for Kausika
Kausika is a name for Indra, the King of the Gods.
The level of instruction is fairly low, as Indra is thought to be none too intelligent. It contains a marvelous mantra.

- * The Perfection of Wisdom in 50 Lines

Tibetan and Chinese translations exist. It contains some stock phrases, including a list of wholesome dharmas, etc.

“ It is difficult to get to the bottom of this Perfection of Wisdom”

“Because, Subhuti, it is absolutely isolated”

“Aye! Alas! O Lord, this Perfection of Wisdom is hard to fathom.”

“Because, Subhuti, the Perfection of Wisdom is absolutely pure.”

“Aye! Alas, O Lord is not the Perfection of Wisdom like unto space?”

“Because, Subhuti, the Perfection of Wisdom is absolutely clear.”

“Alas, alas, O Lord. Is not the Perfection of Wisdom difficult for someone who does not practice?”

- * The Questions of Nagasri
Nagasri is being mentored by Manjusri as they go for alms.
- * How Benevolent King May Protect Their Countries
(By establishing the good Dharma and protecting the Triple Jewel)
- * The Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Lines
A tantric text with obscure meanings
- * 108 Names of the Holy Perfection of Wisdom
- * 25 Doors to Perfect Wisdom

- * The Blessed Perfection of Wisdom, the Mother of All The Tathagatas In One Letter:

“Receive, O Ananda, for the benefit of all beings, the Perfection of Wisdom in One Letter.”

a

This is profounder than it appears.

a , as the first letter in the Sanskrit alphabet, generates all the remaining letters which generate the words which generate the sutras. Just as Prajna Paramita is the mother of all Buddhas, so “a” is the mother of all scripture.

There is a myth in the Mahayana that Shakymuni Buddha, when he taught Dharma, made one single sound, and everyone understood the discourse according to the level and need of each individual in the assembly.

Considering the matter of figure and ground, the “a” symbolizes the 2 truths: the white background is empty Reality, The “a” figure is the manifestation, is the Conventional Reality.

For full translations of these sutras, see “Perfect Wisdom: The Short Prajnaparamita Texts” by Edward Conze

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