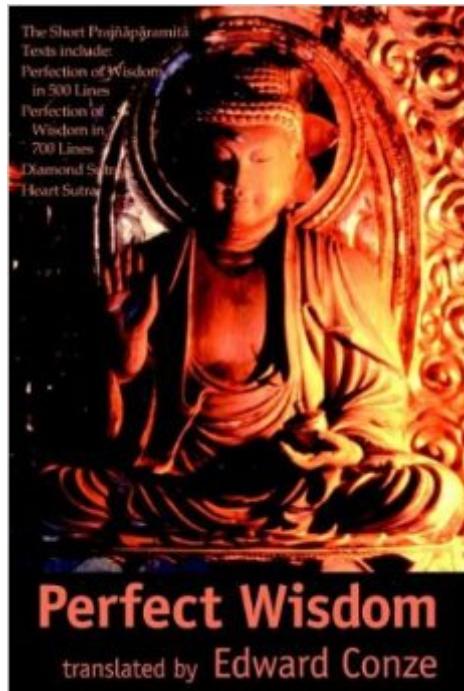


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Perfection Of Wisdom: The Short Prajanaapaaramitaa Texts



Synopsis

The Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, The Prajnaparamita, is a collection of about forty texts. They were composed in India between approximately 100 BC and AD 600. Those contained within this volume are among the shorter ones; they are also some of the most well known such as The Heart Sutra and The Diamond Sutra. The Prajnaparamita texts are central to the Mahayana, the Great Vehicle tradition of Buddhism which today includes the Zen and Tibetan traditions. They are a magnificent work which offer guidance to those who wish to plumb the depths of their own mind and come face to face with the reality of existence by realising the truth of the Buddha's deep teachings on Emptiness and Great Wisdom. Dr Edward Conze (1904-1979) was the author of many books and the translator of much of the Prajnaparamita texts. He served on the faculties of several universities in Britain and the United States including Oxford, London, and California. Not only was he a great Buddhist scholar but also a serious practitioner, and his translations are very highly regarded.

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Customer Reviews

Edward Conze is one of the towering colossuses of Western Mahayana Buddhist scholarship, a name scarcely surpassed in services to Buddhism since it first seeped into the Western consciousness. In this stupendous little book, Conze has translated and compiled an almost complete selection of the shorter Prajnaparamita texts, including the ubiquitous Vajra-Cutter (Diamond) and Hridaya (Heart) Sutras but more notably several vastly less known sutras from the Sanskrit. He has included sections of sutric and tantric Prajnaparamita scriptures, making this a

potent compendium of knowledge of little known Mahayana tantra. This absolutely stunning volume is essential for all libraries of Mahayana Buddhism.

It would take years to fully examine the contents of this book. Its scriptural richness is immense... however some might find it difficult to understand. I was very grateful to have found this book, and a book called 'Buddhist Yoga' (Cleary) which is a good translation of the Sandhinirmocana Sutra. Together these two books are a very valuable collection of the finest of the Sakyamuni Buddha's remnants.

Dr. Conze has collected a large number of short versions of the Prajnaparamita texts. They are informative and valuable especially regarding what Buddhists refer to as Emptiness. Indeed, the Tibetan Buddhists in addition to various Vajrayana texts, often cite and recommend the Prajnaparamita literature which is vast. This literature includes the famous Heart Sutra (which is actually about one page long!). I gave this particular book 4 stars because I've also read the intermediate length version (8000 lines) which is far better. I own (but haven't read yet) the large version (I think its 25,000 lines). There are even larger ones that Dr. Conze hasn't done too. Nevertheless, it might be best to read the short ones first to get a taste for the literature and then move on to the 8000 lines version (probably the one most referenced other than, perhaps, the Heart Sutra itself). Good reading!

The Prajnaparamita sutras are exceptionally profound Mahayana Buddhist texts that are by no means easy to understand. In attempting to read them it soon becomes apparent that the author or authors of these texts were scholars thoroughly schooled in the intricacies of Indian Buddhist thought. It also becomes clear that they must have been spiritual aristocrats, persons who had in fact achieved Enlightenment and who, though scholars, were writing from the point-of-view of the Enlightened. Given this, these texts present us with certain problems. Edward Conze (1904-1979) has been called "the foremost Western scholar of the Prajnaparamita literature" and it seems to me that he has in his various works (such as, for example, his Buddhist Wisdom Books and to a lesser extent in the present book) gone as far as it is possible for a scholar to go in explaining these difficult sutras to a modern audience. I also feel that his many translations of the Prajnaparamita far surpass most others in their clarity and beauty.

good book

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