



# **The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusion: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Diamond Sutra**

*Thich Nhat Hanh*

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## **The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusion: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Diamond Sutra**

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*The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusions* presents a dialogue between the Buddha and his disciple Subhuti which illuminates how our minds construct limited categories of thought. It offers us alternative ways to look at the world in its wholeness so we can encounter a deeper reality; develop reverence for the environment and more harmonious communities, families, and relationships; and act in the world skillfully and effectively.

## **The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusion: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Diamond Sutra Details**

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# **From Reader Review The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusion: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Diamond Sutra for online ebook**

## **Calysto du Masque says**

Thich Nhat Hanh (Hereafter venerated as Thi?n S? Nh?t H?nh) is perhaps the most prolific and accomplished Zen Master of modern times. This is all the more remarkable because Thi?n S? Nh?t H?nh is Vietnamese.

South-East Asia is predominately Theravadan; a Buddhist path far removed from the sect he has risen to great prominence in. Regrettably, the region has also suffered greatly from religious oppression at the hands of communist autocrats for decades.

Thi?n S? Nh?t H?nh has risen above all these challenges and, largely in exile, has combined traditional Zen wisdom with certain methodologies found in Theravadan Buddhism, Western Psychology, and greater Mahayana in general.

These credentials make him the perfect choice for teaching The Diamond Cutter Sutra. This, along with The Heart Sutra forms the core of Zen Buddhist dogma.

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## **Michaelchoa says**

What can I say? A table is not a table, which is why the Buddha calls it a table. The commentary has a few helpful bits, but nothing much deeper than cereal-box jargon. Unfortunately, there is little in the way of structural analysis and significant repetitions of formulae are passed over as insignificant.

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## **Abe Something says**

The Diamond Sutra itself deserves 5 stars. Everyone should read it. This was the 4th time I had read the sutra, and I found it to be the clearest it had ever been. Either I was more receptive, or I had become accustomed to the strange way questions are asked and answered within, either way I came away with more clarity than I had in previous meetings with this work.

In a Kerouac book, maybe the Dharma Bums, or maybe I read this in book of koans, who knows, I once read that when one starts on the path to enlightenment they can see the mountains, as they make progress they realize they do not see mountains, or they see the mountains as upside down, when they have attained enlightenment they can see the mountains again as they always were. This finally makes sense to me. I never thought it would.

I am giving the book 3 stars because I found the commentaries to be lacking. They didn't provide me with any insight I hadn't gotten from my own close and careful reading of the text. I can see where these notes

would be helpful to someone who isn't a strong reader, or is thrown by an introduction to an alien concept, but I don't think the commentaries were as insightful as they could have been. Maybe I just have high standards for extraneous materials after having read so many Norton Critical Editions :)

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### **Kevin says**

One of those elements that seems to resonate across religions is Wisdom. What is Wisdom? I think, when one is honest with oneself, the first thing that comes to mind in ineffability.

Thus shall we think of all this fleeting world:

A star at dawn, a bubble in a stream,

A flash of lightning in a summer cloud,

A flickering lamp, a phantom, and a dream.

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### **Megan says**

This one is going to take time to digest, but I do think I'll be coming back to it again. I liked the commentary more than the sutra itself.

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### **Sudheendra Chaitanya says**

The book's focus is totally on the Sutras themselves, as they ought to be. The attempt to urge us to connect to Buddha directly first, before the commentary is very welcome. That spirit, one wishes, must become more prevalent.

And, Buddha does scintillate, with his insights. I am yet to complete the book. But, just for the lucid and effective translation of the original sutras, the book is worth a lot.

Buddha's 'shunya' is one of the most misunderstood, and there would be a great temptation to give clarity there. The author seems to have desisted from doing so. We must indeed listen to the Buddha directly, and get it! That should be the spirit. Climb the entire mountain, once for all, not necessarily in one breath.

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### **Justin Weigl says**

#### **Great read!**

This book is a great translation and explanation of the Sutra. I would recommend this book to anyone willing to change the way they see the world.

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## **Niklas Braun says**

The most clarifying commentaries I have ever read are by Thich Nhat Hanh. He has a way of relating everything to the modern experience, but not too pandering to childish explanations. His comments have shed a lot of light on the dense Diamond sutra. I highly recommend this book for anyone reading the Diamond sutra for the first time, or the hundredth time.

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## **DROPPING OUT says**

Another book I'll never stop reading!!!

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## **Sam Walters says**

The Diamond Sutra is not for those just starting out with Buddhism and neither is Thích Nhất Hạnh's commentary on it. That said, it's one of the most straightforward and elucidating treatments of it. Just be ready for something that's closer to a scholarly work than a friendly novel, but definitely worth the effort to read it.

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## **M?nh ??t says**

You're what you not you're, and you're. That's it :)

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## **Catie says**

"All composed things are like a dream,  
a phantom, a drop of dew, a flash of lightning.  
That is how to meditate on them.  
That is how to observe them."

"In the dialectics of prajnaparamita, there are three stages: (1) A rose is (2) not a rose, therefore (3) it is a rose. The third rose is very different from the first. The notion "empty of emptiness" (shunyata) in the teaching of prajnaparamita aims at helping us be free from the concept of emptiness."

"We cannot make any statement about the true nature of reality. Words and ideas can never convey reality. This passage of the sutra describes the indescribable nature of all things. If we base our understanding of reality on our concepts of particles, atoms, or composites we are stuck. We must go beyond all concepts if we want to be in touch with the true nature of things."

"All concepts co-arise and are empty of a separate self."

"When we look deeply, we can see that the shortcomings of others are no different than the shortcomings in

ourselves and we can respond in a skillful and compassionate way."

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## Hardcover Hearts says

I read this book on the same vacation that I read *The Alchemist*. This book is a direct opposite of that smarmy book. Thich Nhat Hanh helps to unravel the Diamond Sutra, which is the Buddhist lesson on emptiness. While the lessons on impermanence were easy to grasp, the concept of emptiness has always been more difficult for me, but his style and approach made this much more accessible for me. The first part is the actual translation, and the second is where he pulls it apart and you can get the commentary of a true master and poet.

I plan on reading this book every few years.

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## MyNguyen1709 says

Cu?n sách m? ??u c?a n?m 2017 c?a mình. Ch? ??c kinh v?n có ?o?n hi?u có ?o?n không. ??c ph?n chú gi?i bi?t là s? b? ?nh h??ng, nh?ng nh? v?y mà hi?u bi?t nhi?u h?n. Tên c?a kinh ?úng ra là N?NG ?O?N KIM C??NG BÁT NHÃ BA LA M?T ?A KINH (Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra), th?c ra t? quan tr?ng nh?t là N?ng ?o?n (có kh? n?ng c?t ??t). Bi?n ch?ng Bát nhã có 3 giai ?o?n: bông h??ng không ph?i là bông h??ng cho nên g?i là bông h??ng. Cái bông h??ng th? 3 khác v?i bông h??ng th? nh?t l?m, cái th?y th? 3 là cái th?y nhi?m m?u, th?y bông h??ng ???c t?o thành t? nh?ng y?u t? không ph?i bông h??ng. Khi có cái th?y ?ó mình có th? s? d?ng danh t? bông h??ng mà không có s? nguy hi?m. C?ng giúp ta hi?u thêm v? không và không không. S? th?t không ph?i là khái ni?m, càng mô t? c? th? s? th?t ch?ng nào thì càng ?i xa s? th?t ch?ng ?ó, gi?a s? th?t và khái ni?m luôn có m?t kho?ng cách. Khi ??c s? không còn v??ng m?c vào các khái ni?m Ngã (ta), Nhân (ng?i), Chúng Sanh, Th? gi? (th?i gian c?a m?t sinh m?nh). T?t các các Pháp ??u là Pháp b?t. Càng ??c càng th?y hay và thâm đi?u và nhi?u ?i?u t??ng ??ng ???c d?y trong l?p Yoga mình tham gia.

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## Joshua Buhs says

I'm not equipped to really review this book.

I'll do my best.

The book is a commentary on the Buddha's teaching called "The Diamond that Cuts Through Illusion." Thich Nhất Hạnh (Thay, for those in the know) is a Vietnamese monk who now lives at a retreat in France called Plum Village. Famously, Martin Luther King nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize, although he has not won. He has written many books and a lot of poetry. He was actively involved in attempts to protest the Vietnam War, including as a confidante of those monks and nuns who self-immolated.

The DTCTI is one of the key sutras given by the Buddha, although it does not always seem . . . clear . . . to modern readers. Hence, these commentaries. But note, these are not scholarly. I expected a little bit more historical context and explanation (why does the disciple approach the Buddha by baring his right shoulder? Who knows!) and maybe a little more engagement with its intellectual history--uh, what's up with past lives? Thay cites a few sources but it is never clear how these help to make sense of the sutra. (For example:

"According to such-and-such school of Buddhism . . ." But why should I listen to that school as compared to another.)

Like many of the most prominent interpreters of Buddhism to the West--Pema Chodron, Trungpa Chogyam--Thay is interested in translating seemingly abstract ideas into practical advice for everyday life. Still, while he is better at this than explaining the historically-situated meaning of these ideas, there is still a disconnect, and it never is quite clear how ideas of non-self and non-attachment can be translated into political or social action.

Enough of the troubles. The book is still worth a perusal. It's short, and, at the best of times, can flip perspective enough to make everything seem a little different.

According to Thay, the key sentence in the sutra is, "When innumerable, immeasurable infinite beings become liberated, we do not think that a single being has been liberated." This seems like a paradox, but it is not. One must understand it according to the peculiar dialectical rules of the genre. (That's my inner scholar translating Thay.) Beings to become liberated--but the advanced Buddhist practitioner does not think of it that way--because he or she already knows that individuals are not things. Everything is composed of everything else. In Thay's favored analogy, a rose is not a rose, but is made up of soil and water and sun. When we see a rose as a rose, we are trapped by perceptions. When we see it as composed of other things, we are letting those perceptions go. So although we should act to make everything liberated, we should not force the issue, not praise ourselves for doing so (there is no ourselves: we are all interconnected).

But there can be problems with this way of thinking too, some of which Thay himself seems to slip into: superciliousness and pity. If we look at a jerky person and try to forgive him because of his, say, bad upbringing, we are reducing him, and also risk slipping from compassion into pity: poor bugger, if he only had it better, like me, he'd be better, like me. I'm not sure how to solve this problem, at least not from the text here.

There is also more to the dialectic. After one realizes that a thing is not a thing, but is composed of other things, the next step is then to treat it, again, like a thing. Non-self and non-attachment should not get in the way of communication, but should make it richer. First there was a mountain, then there was no mountain, then there was a mountain. The ideas are rafts for getting through difficult thought problems, but once on the other side, should be abandoned (96, 117).

There is also the difficulty--threat--(on page 134) that in running too fast from one set of concepts--self and attachment--we will reify its opposite, nonself and nonattachment, ironically making those the core of ourselves, becoming attached to them.

Much of the rest of the sutra is spent congratulating itself--if only people could see the world this way, everything would be better, even more so than if everyone were rich.

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