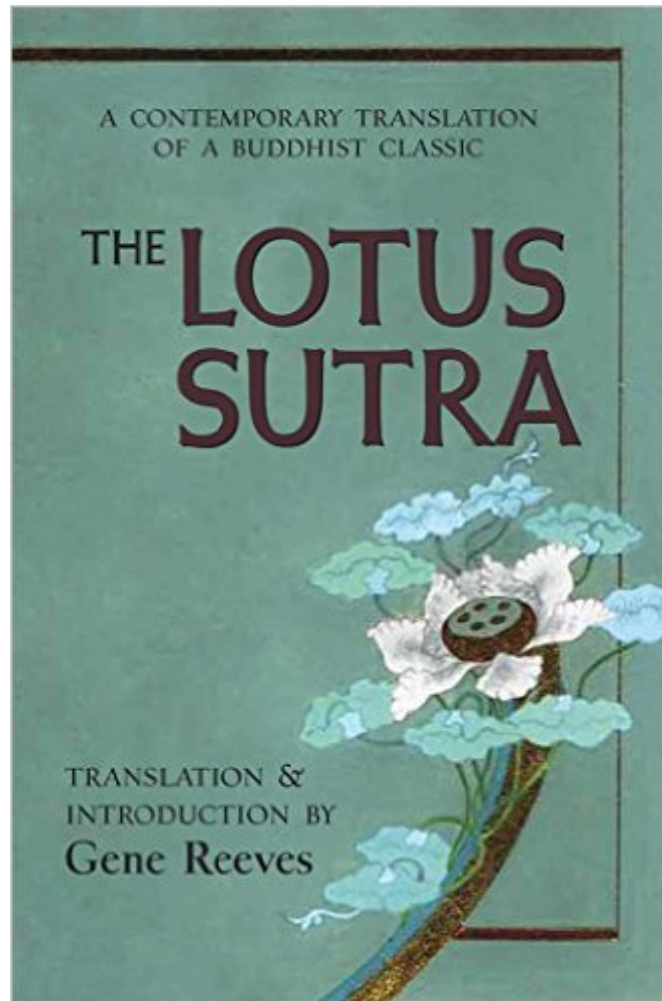


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The Lotus Sutra: A Contemporary Translation Of A Buddhist Classic



Synopsis

The Lotus Sutra is regarded as one of the world's great religious scriptures and most influential texts. It's a seminal work in the development of Buddhism throughout East Asia and, by extension, in the development of Mahayana Buddhism throughout the world. Taking place in a vast and fantastical cosmic setting, the Lotus Sutra places emphasis on skillfully doing whatever is needed to serve and compassionately care for others, on breaking down distinctions between the fully enlightened buddha and the bodhisattva who vows to postpone salvation until all beings may share it, and especially on each and every being's innate capacity to become a buddha. Gene Reeves's new translation appeals to readers with little or no familiarity with technical Buddhist vocabulary, as well as long-time practitioners and students. In addition, this remarkable volume includes the full "threefold" text of this classic.

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Customer Reviews

Dr. Reeves is a well known and respected teacher of the 'threefold' Lotus Sutra (Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma and the Sutra of Meditation on the Practice of Universal Wisdom. I have been a Rissho Kosei-kai member and Buddhist for twenty-four years. In my years of Dharma study, I have become familiar with a couple of translations of the Lotus Sutra, especially Watson (SGI) and Kato (RKK) translations. But unlike other translations of the Lotus, Reeves includes the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings and the Sutra of Meditation of the Practice of Universal Virtue in his Lotus Sutra. I deeply respect his choice since

these two sutras underscore the importance of the Lotus' teachings. I can say unequivocally that the Reeves translation is the easiest to read and comprehend. Dr. Reeves does admit to flaws in his translation, but I know for a fact that he took several years painstakingly reviewing the original Kumarajiva Chinese, Japanese and English translations of the Lotus. If the reader finds any flaws or has questions regarding the Reeves' translation s/he may compare and contrast Reeves' with another of the reader's choice. However, though I am not a scholar, but a Japanese Ekayana-Nichiren Buddhist that has been practicing for twenty-four years, I can wholeheartedly endorse Dr. Reeves' translation as superior enough to stand on its own. Gasshou.

The clarity of Reeves translation of the Lotus Sutra is very impressive. He brings out the heart of the Lotus Sutra while remaining relatively easy to follow and understand. One of the first things that stuck me was that this was done by someone who deeply thought and meditated on the meaning of the text. Reeve's work is far beyond the level of "just write it in English and move on after a bit of proofreading." I do quite a bit of translating myself, and it's clear that this is the work of someone who has come back to the text time and again, asking himself, "but what's it really saying?!" I've studied the Kato edition of the Lotus Sutra for nearly 25 years, and enjoyed it's old-fashioned feel, but this is the version of the Lotus Sutra I'll be reading from now on.

The choice to translate using Greek mythology instead of the Indian is a mistake I cannot comprehend. To be honest, Greek mythology is not much closer to us than Indian mythology is (and I'm European). Otherwise a solid translation but the Greek mythology thing is unforgivable, so I have to give it 3 stars. It's a shame because Gene Reeves is a great mind and a great translator. I can't fathom the reason for that decision. Nothing else calls for a review. The Lotus Sutra is the king of all Buddhist texts.

Reviewing the Lotus Sutra is like reviewing Homer's Iliad or the Book of Jonah. It is one of the world's great wisdom texts but that doesn't mean it is an easy read. It was originally written more or less to be performed, to be chanted and brought to life by human voices, not perused from the luxury of our armchair. Reeves does an admirable attempt at translating but the use of the terms from Greek mythology still remains a problematic and unnecessary choice and in hind sight I would have probably went with another translator.

Gene Reeves did an excellent job in translating The Lotus Sutra from the Chinese into English. It is

here, the entire work, not abridged. The translation is clear and easy to read. He made concessions to English speaking audiences in certain places, making the text more accessible. That is the both the virtue and vice of this work. It is ALL here, and for readers simply interested in the flavor of the work, this is not the book for you. The Lotus Sutra is structured around individual sutras, usually speeches in prose by the Buddha. Following the prose, there same ideas are presented in verse. This pattern is more or less replicated for over thirty sutras. So, for a reader wanting to immerse herself in The Lotus Sutra, this is the work for you. For those who wish to get the flavor of the book without wading into its repetitions, look elsewhere.

I personally have enjoyed studying Buddhist literature ever since moving to Japan eight years ago. Yet, despite my intentions to see this book as a way to examine my own spirituality, I just couldn't come to regard this as anything other than ancient propaganda. Don't get me wrong, from a historical standpoint I found the Lotus Sutra to be quite interesting. But the book takes such great pains at preserving their beliefs, and attacking other sects with words. There are so many references to the authority and perfection of the "Greater Vehicle", the recruitment of followers to spread doctrine (implying that this is one of the most noble of acts), heaping rewards on all true followers, and adding to the pantheon any number of enlightened beings to solidify this sects hold on supreme authority. Being even slightly aware of this book's self-righteous claims lessens my ability to regard it as absolute truth in a religious sense. So for me its worth is in it's cultural and historical descriptions. The translation is superb here, but there were a few instances where the book uses a less familiar term when describing something. This meant that I was forced to pause and reexamine my other books to guarantee I was connecting the right words across all translations. Still this problem didn't arise too much, and was solved for the most part with a little common sense. A wonderful and interesting read overall.. and the translation makes it easy to read.

Very clear translation, minimal old untranslated Buddhist terms. This translation reminds me of a Cleary translation; true to the meaning, clear language, great flow. Awesome scripture; not meant to be taken lightly.

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