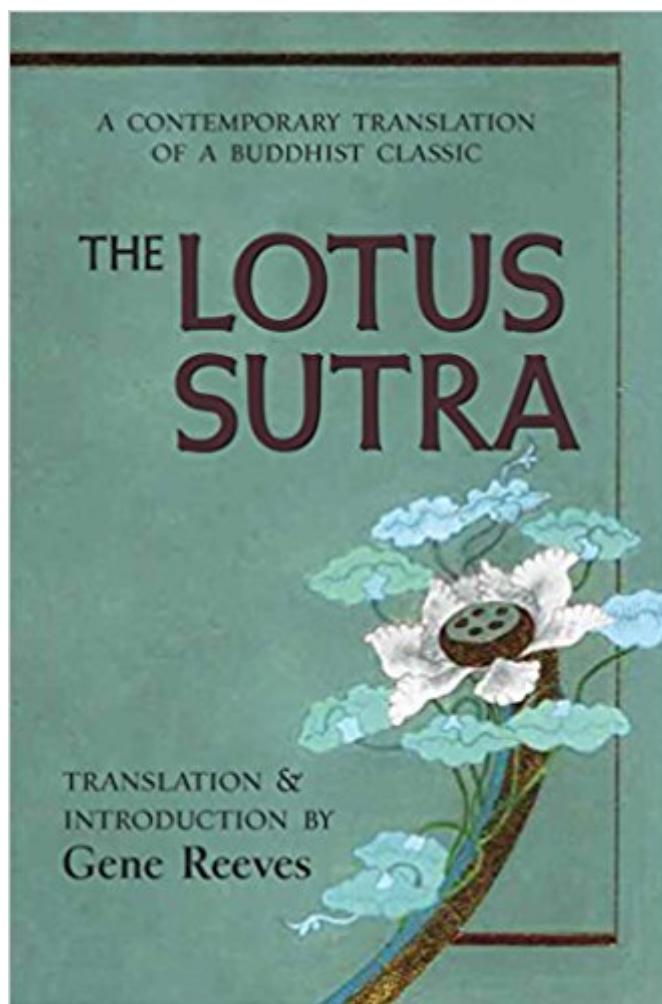


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# The Lotus Sutra: A Contemporary Translation Of A Buddhist Classic



## 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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Difficult as it may be to interpret ancient Tibetan Buddhist imagery for contemporary meditators, it is perhaps even more challenging to make historical Buddhist texts accessible. In a new translation of The Lotus Sutra, Gene Reeves aims to do just this. Reeves uses everyday language wherever possible, translating into English many words that previous works have left in Sanskrit. This approach is particularly appropriate for the Lotus Sutra, which emphasizes that enlightenment is attainable for everyone." (Tricycle)"This translation is immediately the new standard, expressing the Lotus Sutra with accuracy, clarity, and fresh readability. The text's genius and subtle spiritual

teachings are skillfully captured for a wide audience." (Taigen Dan Leighton, Loyola University, author of *Visions of Awakening Space and Time: Dogen and the Lotus Sutra*) "A highly readable new translation of the great Lotus Sutra, Gene Reeves skillfully renders the complexity of the text from a scholarly standpoint while delivering its flavor for practitioners. An invaluable resource for students in the classroom as well as in the meditation hall." (Mark Unno, University of Oregon, author of *Shingon Refractions*) "For readers who are not familiar with the Lotus Sutra, this is an excellent opportunity to acquaint oneself with a bedrock Mahayana text. Dr. Reeves brings a welcome perspective of both scholarship and sympathy to the text, which is extremely multifaceted and requires flexibility to fully represent its fascinating-and at times somewhat frustrating-elements. This new version is also particularly important because it includes the rarely translated *Sutra of Innumerable Meanings* and the *Sutra of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva*, which are traditionally considered to be the preface and appendix of the main text and hold an important place in the liturgy and study of the Lotus Sutra. And Dr. Reeves has made a strong effort to make the text truly accessible to anyone, including non-Buddhists and non-specialists." (Tricycle Editors' Blog)

Gene Reeves is a Buddhist scholar and teacher, process philosopher, and theologian who has lived in Tokyo for over 23 years studying, teaching, and practicing the Buddhism of the Lotus Sutra. He is a founder of the International Buddhist Congregation with headquarters in Tokyo, a part of the much larger Rissho Kosei-kai lay Buddhist organization. He is the translator from Chinese into English of *The Lotus Sutra: A Contemporary Translation of a Buddhist Classic*. His most recently published book is *The Stories of the Lotus Sutra. A Buddhist Kaleidoscope: Essays on the Lotus Sutra*, which he edited, was published in 2002. Reeves is currently working on "A Buddhist Natural Theology" which attempts to relate the process philosophy of A.N. Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne with the Buddhism of the Lotus Sutra. Reeves is a regular contributor to the magazine *Dharma World*, and a frequent speaker on the Lotus Sutra and Chinese Buddhism in Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and the United States. He retired in 2012 as distinguished professor at Renmin University of China in Beijing and continues to do field research on contemporary Chinese Buddhism in China and serve as an International Advisor at Rissho Kosei-kai in Japan. He has taught at the University of Tsukuba in Japan, the University of Peking in China, and at the University of Chicago and Meadville Lombard Theological School, Wilberforce University, and Tufts University in the United States. Born and raised in a small factory town in New Hampshire, Reeves graduated from the University of New Hampshire with a degree in psychology, from Boston University with a degree in theology, and from Emory University with a PhD in philosophy. In addition to his passion

for Buddhism, Reeves has been active for over 50 years in civil rights causes, working for a time with Martin Luther King, Jr. and for Chicago Mayor Harold Washington. Reeves is married to Yayoi Reeves and has homes in Tokyo and Chicago. He has two adult daughters who live and work in the United States.

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.

It is so delightful to have a very readable and lively translation of a scripture beloved to so many. Every time the opportunity comes I enjoy reading and reflecting on these words. Reeves companion book, "Stories from the Lotus Sutra," is also very good. This is a teaching from the heart of the mahayana, and I've always felt it's special gift was the joy of true entrustment. To experience the presence of a vast multitude of awakened and awakening beings, here for us, ever offering "skillful means" to nudge us toward discovery of the ultimate dimension, this is what turns our hearts and minds to that deep trust and confidence making the path joyous. Thanks to all the hard working and perceptive translator/ practitioners whose work of love is so fruitful.

This is an easy to read translation. You don't have to be a scholar or a long time practicing Buddhist to understand this version. The Burton Watson translation is the only other one I have read. It was more difficult. Mr. Reeves' version is easier for a new Buddhist or someone who wants to read and learn about Buddhism to digest.

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.

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.

Reeves does a excellent job translating this sutra and making it very readable, especially for anyone not already familiar with it. He provides some great notes that add pertinent and interesting information to the Lotus Sutra. I didn't mind that he traded out the more technical Buddhist terminology for more lay terms. He still gets the meaning across.

I am awed by the ability to explain the sutra(s) in an understandable manner by so many contemporary authors. We clearly live in a time wherein the opportunity to attain understanding is available to anyone who is willing to commit themselves to taking the time to digest these texts.

Easier to understand than the other version I have and the introduction is very good with respect to background information.

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