

般舟三昧經 *P r a t y u t p a n n a - s a m a d h i S u t r a*

(One-fascicle text)

Translated into Chinese by Tripitaka Master Lokaksema from the Land of Indo-Scythians during the Later Han Dynasty

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Chapter 1 Asking Questions [T.13, 897c]

Thus I have heard. At one time, the Buddha was staying at Kalanda¹) Bamboo Grove Monsatery in Rajagriha²) with [898a] multitudes of innumerable beings, such as bodhisattvas, monks, nuns, laymenm laywomen, devas, dragons, asuras, yakas, garudas, gandharvas and mahoragas, who all sat in the great assembly. Bhadrapala Bodhisattva rose from his seat, adjusted his clothes, prostrated himself on the ground, put his palms togethr and said to the Buddha, "I have some questions. With your permission I wish to ask you." The Buddha said, "Very well. Do ask me the questions. I will give you the answers." Bhadrapala Bodhisattva asked the Buddha the following questions, "By what method of practice can bodhisattvas attain wisdom which is like the ocean taking in thousands of river-waters? By what practice can they be thoroughly conversant in various wisdoms whereby they are able to compehend, free of doubt, all the teachings they hear? By what practice can they know their former lives? By what practice can they attain a long life? By what practice can they always be born in families of great renown and be loved and respected by all their parents, brothers, relatives and friends? By what practice can they attain noble and beautiful countenance? How can they acquire distinguished intellect which is unrivaled in the world and penetrating wisdom which pervades all existgence? By what practice can they attain accomplished merit and fulfilled virtue which naturally produce boundless majestic Buddha-power and glorious Buddha-lands? By what practice can they subdue devils? By what practice can they attain unrestricted power whereby their vows are fulfilled? By what practice can they enter the Dharani-gate? By what practice can they attain supernatural power to travel whereby they visit all the Buddha-lands? By what practice can they attain lion-like courage in which they have nothing to fear and are not liable to be influenced by any devil? By what practice can they attain the Buddha's sacred nature in which they can hold close to heart and comprehend all the teachings and do not forget them? By what practice can they attain contentedness, become free of flattery and deceitfulness and remain unattached to three things?³) By what practice can they attain unhinderedness in which they are possessed of omniscience⁴) and their teachings do not deviate from the Buddha's intention? By what practice can they get people's faith? By what practice can they attain eight kinds of voice⁵) whereby they enter thousands of millions of sounds? By what practice can they attain excellent physical characteristics and marks? By what practice can they attain penetrating hearing? By what practice can they attain the eye of the Way with which they see what is going to happen? By what practice can they attain ten powers and true wisdom? By what practice can they contemplate, with concentration of thought, all the Buddhas of the ten quarters appearing before them? By what practice can they realize that the essence of the four matters⁶) is nothingness? By

what practice can they, while dwelling here, see innumerable Buddha-lands of the ten quarters and know all the good and evil states of existence of the people, devas, dragons, demi-gods, down to crawling creatures, that inhabit the Buddha-lands? These are my questions. How should one practice? I beseech you, the Buddha, to expound this and clear all my doubts." The Buddha said to Bhadrapala, "Very well. Your questions serve a great deal - an incalculably great deal - to lead people to enlightenment. The cause which made you ask these questions lies in your former life when a past Buddha was in the world. At that time, you performed meritorious acts, such as making offerings to Buddhas, seeking Buddhist teachings and strictly observing the precepts. This was the cause. Also, you always begged [898b] alms and never accepted invitations to dinner; you organized many assemblies of bodhisattvas; you taught people to stop doing evil; you looked upon all beings with the eye of equality. This was the cause. Furthermore, you always had great compassion and great mercy. This was the cause. Your merit thus accumulated was incalculable." The Buddha said to Bhadratapala, "There is a samadhi called 'contemplating all Buddhas of the ten quarters appearing before one's eye.' If you practice this samadhi, you will have answers to all your questions." Bhadrapala said to the Buddha, "Please explain it to me. O Buddha, your exposition will serve a great deal to lead people to enlightenment and bring peace to beings of the ten quarters. Please manifest a great illumination for the sake of bodhisattvas."7) The Buddha said to Bhadrapala, "There is a samadhi called 'concentration of thought.'8) Bodhisattvas should constantly practice it, and never engage in other methods of practice. This is the foremost of all meritorious practices." Chapter 2 Practice The Buddha said to Bhadrapala, "If bodhisattvas wish to attain this samadhi quickly, they should always have great resolution. Those who practice it as prescribed can attain it. Do not allow the slightest doubt, even as small as a hair, to creep in. This method of concentration of thought is called 'bodhisattva practice surpassing all practices.' Raise the swiftness of mind and believe in this teaching. According to the teaching you have received, think of the (western) direction. Be mindful and sever all other thoughts. Make firm resolution and have no doubt. Be diligent in practice and be not indolent. Raise not a thought of being nor a thought of non-being. Think not of advancing; think not of regressing. Think not of things before you; think not of things behind you. Think not of things to your left; think not of things to your right. Think not of non-being; think not of being. Think not of things remote; think not of things nearby. Think not of painfulness; think not of itiness. Think not of hunger; think not of thirst. Think not of cold; think not of heat. Think not of suffering; think not of pleasure. Think not of being born; think not of becoming old. Think not of sickness; think not of dying. Think not of body. Think not of living; think not of the span of life. Think not of poverty; think not of wealth. Think not of nobleness; think not of baseness. Think not of lust; think not of greed. Think not of things small; think not of things large. Think not of things long; think not of things short. Think not of beauty; think not of ugliness. Think not of evil; think not of good. [898c] Think not of anger; think not of joy. Think not of sitting; think not of rising. Think not of walking; think not of standing. Think not of sutras; think not of teachings. Think not of justice; think not of injustice. Think not of abandoning; think not of taking. Think not of ideas; think not of consciousness. Think not of detachment; think not of attachment. Think not of voidness; think not of substance. Think not of lightness; think not of heaviness. Think not of difficulty; think not of ease. Think not of

deepness; think not of shallowness. Think not of broadness; think not of narrowness. Think not of your father; think not of your mother. Think not of your wife; think not of your child. Think not of relatedness; think not of estrangement. Think not of hatefulness; think not of fondness. Think not of gaining; think not of losing. Think not of success; think not of defeat. Think not of purity; think not of turbidity. Sever all thoughts and be mindful for a fixed period. Let not your mind be disturbed; be ever diligent. Count not the years; be not indolent each coming day. Raise a determined mind; be not lazy mid-way. Except when asleep, be zealous in your will. Always live alone and avoid gatherings. shew evil persons and approach virtuous friends. Associate with a good teacher and revere him as a Buddha. Hold fast to your will and ever be supple-minded. Meditate on equality in everything. Stay away from your home town and your relatives. Abandon love and lust and perform pure practices. Take the way to the Unconditioned and sever all desires. Cast away distracted thoughts and practice concentration. When learning literary wisdom, be sure it complies with dhyana. Get rid of the three defilements⁹⁾ and cleanse the six sense-bases.¹⁰⁾ Abandon carnal passions and leave all attachments. Seek not with a greedy mind to accumulate much wealth. Learn contentment in eating and be not greedy for tasty food. Restrain yourself and take not a life for food. Dress yourself as prescribed and decorate not your body. Ridicule not others; be not proud and haughty. Be not arrogant; hold not yourself aloof. [899a] When expounding a sutra, be in accord with the Dharma. Know that your body is from the beginning like an illusion. Cling not to the aggregates;¹¹⁾ stand aloof from the elements.¹²⁾ The aggregates are bandits; the four (elements)¹³⁾ are snakes. All are ephemeral, and all momentary. There is no eternal self; the enlightened know it to be void in itself. As causes and conditions meet and part, things come into existence and dissolve. Having realized this well, you will know that all are void from the beginning. Having pity and mercy for all sentient beings. Give free gifts to the poor and benefit the needy. This is the intense concentration; of all bodhisattva practices, This is the way to the ultimate wisdom, the practice surpassing all." The Buddha said to Bhadrabala, "If you hold to this method of practice, you will attain the samadhi in which all the present Buddhas appear before you. If a bhiksu, bhiksuni, upasaka or upasika wants to practice according to the prescribed method, he or she should strictly observe the precepts, dwell alone in a place and contemplate Amida Buddha of the western quarter where he lives now. According to the teaching received, one should remember: ten million kotis of Buddha-lands away from here, there is a land called 'Sukhavati.'¹⁴⁾ Contemplate this land with singleness of mind, for a day and night up to seven days and nights. The seventh day having passed, one will see it. It is as though one sees things in a dream without discerning day and night or inside and out; one sees them even though they are in the dark and there are many obstacles in between. O Bhadrabala, bodhisattvas should do this contemplation. Then high mountains, Sumeru mountains, or whatever dark places there are in the Buddha-lands (between here and Sukhavati), will all give way and will not cause any hindrance. It is not that these bodhisattvas see with a divine eye, hear with a divine ear or reach the Buddha-land with divine feet. It is not that they die here and are born (in order to see the Land). But they see all this while sitting here. "Let us suppose that a man hears of a prostitute in Vaisali, named Sumati, another man hears of one named Amrapali and still another hears of a girl named Utpalavarna becoming a prostitute. These men have never seen those prostitutes but when they hear of the girls, they entertain

lustful thoughts. Though living in Rajagriha, these three men think of the girls about the same time. Thus, in a dream, they go to see and spend the night with the girls. When they awake, they each remember their girls." The Buddha said to Bhadrapala, "I have given you this parable of three girls. Keep this (vision of Amida Buddha) in mind and expound this sutra to others to make them realize this insight. Then you will attain the stage of non-retrogression and realize the highest, perfect enlightenment. Afterwards you will become a Buddha named Suprabuddha." The Buddha continued, "Bodhisattvas in this land can see Amida Buddha by single-mindedly contemplating him. Now, let it be asked what method of practice they should perform in order to be born in that Land. Amida Buddha replies, "Those who desire to be born [899b] should call my Name unceasingly. Then you will attain birth." The Buddha said, "By means of concentrated mindfulness one attains birth. Always contemplate the Buddha's body which possesses the thirty-two characteristics and eighty minor physical marks and emits billions of rays of light shining everywhere. His majestic countenance is incomparable. To the assembly of bodhisattvas he teaches that all things are [originally] indestructible forms. Why are they destructible forms? Painfulness, itchiness, ideas, birth-and-death, consciousness, earth, water, fire, wind, worldly existence and heavenly existence, including Brahma and Mahabrahma heavens, and indestructible forms. Through the practice of Buddha-contemplation one attains this samadhi." The Buddha said to Bhadrapala, "Who are the witnesses to this bodhisattva samadhi? My disciples, such as Mahakasyapa, Indradatta, and Susima Devaputra, those who happen to know (of this samadhi) and those who practice and attain it. They are the witnesses. Thus, Bhadrapala, if you wish to see present Buddhas of the ten directions, you should single-mindedly direct your thought to where they dwell and should not entertain other thoughts. Then you will be able to see them. It is as if one who is traveling far out in other counties or countries think of one's family and relatives in one's native place; in a dream, one returns home, sees one's family and relatives and enjoys talking to each other. After awakening, one tells one's friends what has happened." The Buddha said, "If bodhisattvas hear the Buddha's name and wish to see him, they should continuously direct their thoughts to where he dwells. Then they will be able to see him. It is as when a monk contemplates a dead person's skeleton. If he contemplates with attachment to the object, it may appear blue, white, red or black. Nobody brings those colors. It is simply his thought that brings them. If bodhisattvas depend on the Buddha's empowerment, they will freely dwell in the samadhi, in which they will be able to see a Buddha of any direction as they wish. How is this possible? They are able to see the Buddha by availing themselves of the three powers: the Buddha's power, samadhi-power, and one's merit-power. Suppose a young, handsome man dressed in fine clothes wants to see his image. He holds a mirror in his hand, or sees his image reflected in hemp oil, clear water or crystal. How could it be that the image comes from outside into the mirror, hemp oil, water or crystal?" Bhadrapala replied, "No, it could not, Lord of Heavens. It is only by the help of a mirror, hemp oil, water or crystal that the man sees his image. It is not that the image comes from within or from without." The Buddha said, "Very well, Bhadrapala. Because the material is pure and clean, that which is (reflected) in it is clearly seen. If you wish to see a Buddha, you can see one. Having seen him, you can ask him questions. Having asked him questions, you will have good reward. Having heard the teaching, you will greatly rejoice and think: Where has the Buddha come from and where do I go (after death)? When I think of the Buddha, it is from nowhere that he comes; it is to nowhere that I go. When I think of the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the realm of

non-form, those three realms are simply mind's creation. It is what I think of that I see. Mind creates a Buddha. Mind sees itself. Mind is Buddha-mind. Buddha-mind is my own body. Mind sees Buddha. Mind itself does not know mind. Mind itself does not [899c] see mind. If mind is accompanied by thought, it becomes ignorant. If mind is without thought, it is Nirvana. Things (in the world) are not to be enjoyed. (They are merely thought'sd creation.) Even if you think of something, it is empty. It is not to be grasped at. This is how bodhisattvas dwelling in the samadhi see." Then the Buddha uttered the following verses: "Mind does not know itself; mind does not see mind. If mind gives rise to thought, it is ignorant; no-mind is Nirvana. These things (in the world) are substanceless; they constantly arise and are to be thought of. Those who see emptiness through understanding are free of all thoughts." Chapter 3 Matters