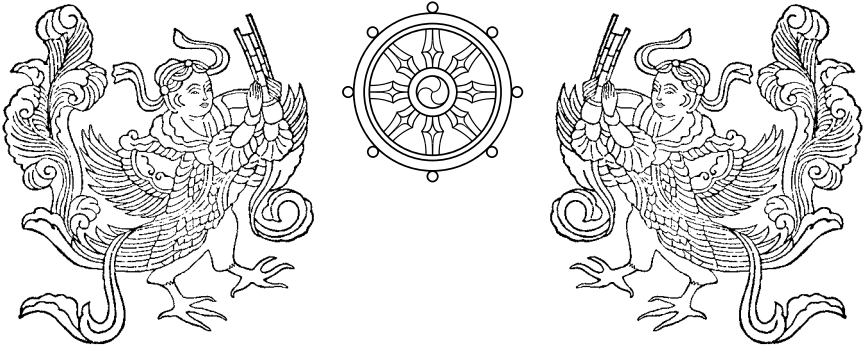


**MARVELOUS STORIES**  
*from*  
**THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM**

130 Didactic Stories from Ārya Nāgārjuna's  
*Exegesis on the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*

By the Great Indian Buddhist Patriarch  
**Ārya Nāgārjuna**  
(ca 200 CE)

Translation by Bhikshu Dharmamitra



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## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

*Marvelous Stories from the Perfection of Wisdom* is a collection of stories drawn from the massive and encyclopedic *Exegesis on the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* (*Mahāprajñāpāramitā Upadeśa* / 大智度論) composed by the Indian monastic patriarch Ārya Nāgārjuna (ca 200 CE), a renowned and pivotal figure in the doctrinal clarification and popularization of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The English translations presented here were made from the sole extant edition of the *Exegesis* as it is preserved in the Chinese Buddhist canon. This is the Sanskrit-to-Chinese translation created by the great translator-monk Kumārajīva in approximately 400 CE.

The selections included here vary markedly in length and character. Some are simply abbreviated versions of anecdotes found elsewhere in the scriptures of Southern and/or Northern School Buddhism. Others are much longer tales which may or may not be directly based on sutras. Some stories probably do have a factual basis whereas others roam freely into the realm of the unbelievable. Hyperbolic-description of this sort is quite common in Indian religious texts prioritizing sublime ideals and principles while being much less concerned with prosaic issues like plausibility.

This is not an ordinary story book wherein stories are related primarily for entertainment value. (Though many *are* fascinating.) Rather, it is a collection of tales set forth by Nāgārjuna for the express purpose of delivering important teachings on Dharma.

I have organized the story collection into seven chapters. The first six are associated with the “six perfections” that are standard in Mahāyāna Buddhism: giving, moral virtue, patience, vigor, meditative discipline, and wisdom. The stories in these six chapters correspond to those tales contained within Nāgārjuna’s very long serial discussion of the six perfections in Chapters 17 through 30 of the *Exegesis*. The seventh chapter consists of stories on “various topics” found elsewhere in Nāgārjuna’s immense work.

My arrangement of the stories according to the above schema may be slightly misleading, for the “perfections stories” often deal not just with the perfections themselves, but also with topics ranging beyond the scope of the perfection purportedly being treated in the corresponding chapter. Conversely, a fair number of the stories supposedly dealing with “various topics” happen to deal most directly with one or another of the six perfections.

I should mention that this volume is not exhaustively inclusive of every last story found in the *Exegesis*, but rather is a selective collection. Nearly all of the stories collected here are “framed” by brief doctrinal observations or discussions included by Nāgārjuna for the purpose of clarifying or amplifying a doctrinal meaning or lesson implicit in the story itself.

I was influenced to create this collection of stories not solely on account of a conviction that others would appreciate them as much as I have. I have found when giving talks on Buddhism to lay audiences that including stories along with the teachings makes “Dharma talks” more engaging, more memorable, and hence more useful. I realized early on that other Dharma teachers would likely be assisted by the ready availability of a collection of didactic stories helpful in setting forth instruction for Dharma students. Hence this realization became a primary rationale for preparation and publication of *Marvelous Stories from the Perfection of Wisdom*.

As with all Kalavinka Press translations, I have included the source text in both traditional and short-form scripts on the *verso* page. This was done in order to facilitate use of this work in the teaching of Sino-Buddhist Classical Chinese and was also done with an eye toward facilitating study by specialists and bilingual native readers of the Chinese language unfamiliar with classical Chinese Buddhist technical terms. “Source Text Variant Readings” from other editions are included as an appendix. The digital text used in this book is the 2004 edition of *CBETA*.

My apologies to those who justifiably would have expected copious annotation. Unfortunately, failing health precludes inclusion notes other than the few endnotes included in the initial draft translation.

I hope this work will be entertaining and useful for both Dharma students and teachers. As with all of my translations, corrections and suggestions for improvement are much appreciated. They may be forwarded via [KALAVINKA.ORG](http://KALAVINKA.ORG) website email.

Bhikshu Dharmamitra  
September 6, 2008