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in Twenty-One Lines
with Newar Commentary by
Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya
A Study and Translation**

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Prajñāpāramitā Ekaviṃśati-Stotra: Praise of Prajñāpāramitā in Twenty-One Lines with Newar Commentary by Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya A Study and Translation

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Abstract

This study is an annotated edition and translation of Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya's 1909 Newar commentarial translation of the *Prajñāpāramitā Ekaviṃśati-Stotra*, a devotional praise of the Prajñāpāramitā (Perfection of Wisdom) attributed to Rāhulabhadra (c. 2nd century CE), a contemporary of Nāgārjuna. The paper also features an extensive introduction which discusses the *stotra* by Rāhulabhadra and provides a brief introduction to the Newar language and Buddhism, a biographical introduction to Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya (1858–1935), a discussion of his commentarial translation into Newar, a linguistic note, and an explanation of the conventions utilised in editing and translating the text. The edition is based on two source-texts—a manuscript copy (Āśā Saphu Kuthi DP no. 4075) and Niṣṭhānanda's second printed edition—and features a critical apparatus. For comparative purposes, a translation of the Chinese text (the earliest witness for the *stotra*) is also provided in an appendix.

The study focuses on Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya, a central figure in the Newar Buddhist revival. His 1909 translation was one of the earliest movable-type Newar publications. His commentarial translation integrates doctrinal elaborations characteristic of Newar Buddhist exegesis. The study explores his interpretive strategies, particularly his emphasis on *Prajñāpāramitā* as a goddess, text, and devotional object. This study highlights the transmission and adaptation of *Prajñāpāramitā* literature in Nepal, revealing the interplay between textual traditions, religious practice, and vernacular exegesis. The *Ekaviṃśati* emerges as both a philosophical treatise and a lived text within Newar Buddhist communities.

Keywords

Prajñāpāramitā Ekaviṃśati-Stotra, Rāhulabhadra, Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya, Newar Buddhism, Mahāyāna, Sanskrit, Nepāl Bhāṣā (Newar)

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Introduction

Rāhulabhadra's *Prajñāpāramitā Ekaviṃśati-Stotra*

The *Prajñāpāramitā Ekaviṃśati-Stotra*, or the *Praise of the Perfection of Wisdom in Twenty-One Verses*, is a short philosophical praise of the Perfection of Wisdom, or *Prajñāpāramitā*, often attributed to Rāhulabhadra, a potential contemporary of Nāgārjuna. This *stotra*, while not as famous today as the *Hṛdaya* or *Heart Sūtra*, holds its own significance. It is found at the beginning of many manuscripts of texts in *Prajñāpāramitā* literature copied in Nepal.¹ It would have been well-known to Newar Vajrācāryas as a concise encapsulation of *Prajñāpāramitā* thought as it was received in Nepal.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the *Prajñāpāramitā* is not only conceived of as the sixth of six perfections (*pāramitā*) required of a *bodhisattva* to attain full awakening or buddhahood, entailing a state wherein phenomena are seen without attachment or delusion, but is also a term that came to be used synonymously with the texts in which that realisation is fully explicated, and lent its name to their titles. As such, we can speak of *Prajñāpāramitā* literature as a genre. As the principle and genre of the *Prajñāpāramitā* developed in the Buddhist world, that principle began to be deified in goddess form. While new implications of the nature and form of the *Prajñāpāramitā* changed over time, none of these changes erased prior understandings, and the *Prajñāpāramitā*, as understood in contemporary Nepal, is not only a text and a genre of texts but also a goddess, a powerful, personal, devotional, and transformative principle of the Dharma, whose realisation in the mind of the practitioner is sufficient for awakening (*bodhi*).

Many treatises, praises, and ritual texts not considered to have been directly spoken by the Buddha have also been written within this genre. While the *Prajñāpāramitā* genre is often associated with the Madhyamaka school of Buddhist philosophy, it is more accurately these treatises that directly comment on *Prajñāpāramitā* that fit within this genre. One of the first, then, appears to have been Rāhulabhadra's praise in twenty-one verses, the *Ekaviṃśati*. Not much is known about Rāhulabhadra as a person, though the same name appears much later in Indian Buddhist history as the name of a *mahāsiddha*. However, traditional accounts of Rāhulabhadra converge on his being a contemporary of Nāgārjuna. While the Chinese tradition has tended to position him as a disciple of Nāgārjuna or Āryadeva,² Candrakīrti sees him as a teacher of Nāgārjuna.³

The *Ekaviṃśati*'s earliest witness is its appearance in fascicle 18 of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-Śāstra* (translated by Kumārajīva and traditionally attributed to Nāgārjuna),⁴ datable to c. 405 CE. The text of the *śāstra* does not name Rāhulabhadra as the author of the praise. Yinshùn argues, based on conclusions reached by Etienne Lamotte and Christian Lindtner, that the fact that the author of the *śāstra* quotes this praise when Rāhulabhadra is often said to have been a disciple of Āryadeva is evidence against Nāgārjuna's authorship of

¹ E.g. Cambridge University Library MS Add. 1643 (c. 1015 CE). Discussed also in Michael Hahn, 'Zwei Texte aus dem Phudrag-Kanjur', *Indica et Tibetica* 13 (1988), 59.

² E.g. in Kivkara and Tányào's *Chronicle of the Successive Transmission of the Dharma Canon* 付法藏因緣傳 (T2058.319c14). For abbreviations and sigla (and the citation conventions for the Taishō Tripiṭaka) please see the Abbreviations and Sigla section at the end of the Introduction.

³ J.W. de Jong, 'La Madhyamakaśāstrastuti de Candrakīrti', *Oriens Extremus* 9, no. 1 (1962), 49–51.

⁴ T25.1509.190b10–191a1.

the *śāstra*, whose second-generation disciple must have lived a while after him. In contrast, Jízàng's *Commentary on the Mūlamadhyamaka-Kārikā* 中觀論疏 states that while Nāgārjuna 'praises Prajñā in a *gāthā*', that *gāthā* 'was actually composed by Dharma Master Rāhulabhadra'. In terms of the relative timing of these figures, Yinshùn explains that Jízàng suggests that since 'Nāgārjuna, Rāhulabhadra, and Āryadeva were contemporaries', Nāgārjuna's *śāstra* could quote the others' words.⁵ While there are doubts about the authorship of the *śāstra*, this dispute will not be our focus here. The Chinese text, however, is interesting because it differs from the Sanskrit text that we currently have (see Appendix).

The earliest Sanskrit manuscript containing the *stotra* appears to be the Cambridge University Library MS Add. 1643, which was copied in Nepal in 1015 CE. Around the same time, we see a version in the Phudrag-Kanjur (c. 11th century) and the Tanjur (c. late 11th century to early 12th century);⁶ it later appears in the Derge⁷ and Peking canons.⁸ While Tibetan tradition has often attributed the *stotra* to Nāgārjuna, it was identified by Bu ston as belonging to Rāhulabhadra, who nonetheless lists it in a set of *stotras* attributed to Nāgārjuna. Bu ston gives it two names, the *Nirvikalpastotra* (after its first verse) and the *Prajñāpāramitāstotra* (which appears in its Sanskrit colophon), but gives its length as 40 stanzas.⁹

Edward Conze first translated the *stotra* into a Western language, initially in English in 1951 and then in German in 1957, with a revised English version appearing in 1959.¹⁰ Conze's translation is poetic, but it has what we may consider to be errors. A more authoritative edition and translation into German, consulting various Sanskrit witnesses and two early Tibetan manuscripts, was produced by Michael Hahn in 1988.¹¹ Several translations from the Chinese exist, including Lamotte's translation,¹² the English translation thereof,¹³ and Robert Smithram's 2021 translation of the fascicle.¹⁴

The *stotra* itself, in *anuṣṭup śloka*, serves as a fine poetic encapsulation of Prajñāpāramitā thought, expressing the ineffable and all-encompassing nature of this realisation in a manner that Yinshùn characterised as establishing a vision of Prajñāpāramitā as essentially monistic—where different aspects of Prajñāpāramitā take on different conventions depending upon the context in which they are spoken about. For example, when discussing the virtue of cessation, Prajñāpāramitā is termed '*nirvāṇa*'; when talking about the virtue of

⁵ Yinshùn, *Yōngguāngjí* 永光集 (Zhèngwén, 2005), 97–98.

⁶ Hahn, 'Zwei Texte', 58.

⁷ *Bstod tschogs*, Fol. 76a1–76b7. As cited by Hahn.

⁸ *Bstod tschogs*, Fol. 87b2–88b3. As cited by Hahn.

⁹ Hahn, 'Zwei Texte', 57.

¹⁰ Edward Conze, trans., 'Rahulabhadra: Hymn to Perfect Wisdom', *The Middle Way: Journal of the Buddhist Society* 26, no. 1 (1951), 24–25; trans., *Im Zeichen Buddhas: Buddhistische Texte* (Fischer Bücherei, 1957), 123–125; trans., *Buddhist Scriptures* (Penguin Books, 1959), 168–170.

¹¹ Hahn, 'Zwei Texte'.

¹² Etienne Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse: Chapitres 42 suite–48* (Institut orientaliste de Louvain, 1966), 1060–1065.

¹³ Karma Migme Chödrön, trans., 'Part 3—The Prajñāpāramitāstotra', *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* (digital version on *Wisdom Library*, 2019), <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225451.html>.

¹⁴ Robert Smithram, trans., *The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise: Fascicle Eighteen* (Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center, 2021), 9–15.

awakening, it is termed ‘*bodhi*’; and when discussing its nature as leading beings to that awakening, it is termed the ‘one vehicle’ (*ekayāna*).¹⁵

The text opens by establishing the *Prajñāpāramitā* as faultless, ineffable, and all-pervading, likening it to space and using the analogy of the moon and moonlight to illustrate how it is pure and non-dual with its functions and pervasiveness (vv. 1–3). It then extends the non-dualism to a familial dimension, establishing the *Prajñāpāramitā* not only as the teacher and object of contemplation of all *buddhas* (v. 3), but also as substantive of the *buddhas*’ nature (v. 4), the generative force behind awakening (v. 6), and even as the ‘paternal grandmother’ of all beings (v. 7)—whose father in the analogy is understood to be the *buddhas*. These passages will likely bring to mind the passages in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* about the *Prajñāpāramitā* being the mother and genetrix of all *bodhisattvas*.¹⁶ Jízàng also draws out the same maternal-paternal analogy in his *Commentary on the Mūlamadhyamaka-Kārikā*, where he likens *prajñā* to a mother because it is vacuous, still, and akin to *yīn* (陰), while *upāya* is likened to the father for its active, dynamic quality resembling *yáng* (陽),¹⁷ an analogy which Jízàng supports with a quote from the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* which establishes the analogy of *prajñā* as mother and *upāya* as father.¹⁸

The praise employs extensive natural imagery, such as the moon’s rays being followed by stars (v. 8) and dewdrops melting in the sun’s warmth (v. 10), to illustrate the pervasive and paradoxical nature of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. While the *Prajñāpāramitā* is stainless and pure, its nature can inspire fear in the foolish, undercutting the presumptions underlying their sense of reality, and comfort in the wise, bringing them liberation and bliss (v. 11), reminiscent of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*’s discussion about how one can identify a *bodhisattva* as one who does not give rise to fear upon hearing the *Prajñāpāramitā*.¹⁹

The text then moves to a more paradoxical tone, suggesting that the wise do not apprehend the *Prajñāpāramitā* as it neither goes anywhere nor comes from anywhere (v. 13), reminiscent of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*’s statement that the *buddhas* neither go anywhere nor come from anywhere.²⁰ It suggests that there are people who both see and do not see the *Prajñāpāramitā* and are still bound in *saṃsāra*, as well as people who both see and do not see the *Prajñāpāramitā* and are liberated, portraying it as something whose realisation requires absolute acceptance of non-apprehension (vv. 14–15). This paradoxical nature is then extended into the *Prajñāpāramitā*’s ineffability: while it is ‘astonishing, profound, and famous’, it is elusive and like an illusion—seen and yet not seen (v. 16). Despite its myriad forms and names, its true nature remains beyond the confines of ordinary language and thought, meaning that any statement about it is not a statement about it (v. 18).

¹⁵ Yinshùn, *Shèngmángjīng Jiǎngjì* 勝鬘經講記 (Zhèngwén, 1951), 191–192.

¹⁶ E.g., P.L. Vaidya, ed., *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (Mithila Institute, 1960), 125.

¹⁷ T1824.42.20c11–18.

¹⁸ Corresponding to v. 1 at §7.6, Klaus Wille, ed., “Vimalakīrtinirdeśa,” *Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages* (2020), https://gretel.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretel/corpus/transformations/html/sa_vimalakirtinirdeza.htm.

¹⁹ Vaidya, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, 3. Here, the term is italicised to indicate that it refers to the text specifically, whereas when not italicised, it refers to the *Prajñāpāramitā* more inclusively, yet still not excluding the textual referent.

²⁰ Vaidya, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, 253.

The text concludes with a fervent aspiration—amidst a reinforcement of ineffability—that through the accumulation of merit via the praise of Prajñāpāramitā, the whole world may eventually recognise it as the highest resort (v. 21). Rather than being a dry philosophical treatise or *kārikā*, Rāhulabhadra composed a tapestry of metaphors, paradoxes, and devotional imagery, positioning the Prajñāpāramitā as the sole path to liberation, as affirmed by its veneration by *buddhas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and *śrāvakas* alike (v. 17).

On the Newar Language and Newar Buddhism

While I intend the translation in this paper to be accessible to a general readership, the edition itself may only be accessible to specialists already familiar with the Newar language and Newar Buddhism. With this dual readership in mind, those already familiar with the Newar language and Buddhism may wish to skip over this section. For a general readership, however, a few words on the Newar language and Buddhism may be of assistance.

Newar is a Tibeto-Burman language,²¹ popularly known as Newari but referred to by many native speakers and writers by the Sanskrit name Nepāl Bhāṣā (meaning Nepal Language) or the colloquial Newar name Newāḥ Bhāy or Newāḥ,²² commonly spelled in English as Newar,²³ by which I shall refer to it in this paper. The speakers of Newar are the indigenous population of the Kathmandu Valley, initially concentrated in small city-states (primarily Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur) and out-of-valley clusters.²⁴ Our knowledge of Newar in its historical forms dates back to the 12th century.²⁵ However, it took on its mature literary form in the 15th to 16th centuries.²⁶ This historical literary form of Newar is called 'Classical Newar'. The term 'Contemporary Newar' refers to colloquial Newar, which began to be written in prose, starting with figures like Niṣṭhānanda. Contemporary Newar exhibits several differences from Classical Newar, and owing to a preference for the Classical forms in writing until the 20th century, it is challenging to trace its development fully.²⁷ Moreover, Niṣṭhānanda still utilised terms and grammatical forms that may be considered Classical but are no longer common in Contemporary Newar, such as the locative *-sa*,²⁸ where the modern Newar would have *-e* or *-ay*. Niṣṭhānanda also uses these modern forms,²⁹ so we can consider his work to be evidence of a transitional period.

²¹ Dan Raj Regmi, *A Sociolinguistic Survey of the Languages of Nepal: A Synopsis (Including a Sociolinguistic Typology of the Tibeto-Burman Languages Spoken in Nepal)* (LINCOM GmbH, 2021), 90.

²² Tej Ratna Kansakar, 'Newari Language and Linguistics: Conspectus', *Contributions to Nepalese Studies Journal* 8, no. 2 (1981), 1.

²³ John Whelpton and Michael Hutt, 'The Catalogue of the Hodgson Collection in the British Library', *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 23 (2011), 134n3. The popular 'Newari' (or Nevārī) is rarely used in contemporary Newar studies due to widespread opposition by language activists.

²⁴ Regmi, *Sociolinguistic Survey*, 90–96.

²⁵ Kamal Prakash Malla, 'The Earliest Dated Document in Newari: The Palmleaf from Ukū Bāhāḥ NS 235/AD1114', *Kailash* (1990).

²⁶ Siegfried Lienhard and Thakur Lal Manandar, eds., *Nepalese Manuscripts, Part I: Nevārī and Sanskrit* (Franz Steiner Verlag, 1988), ix–xvii.

²⁷ Kansakar, 'Newari Language and Linguistics', 2–4.

²⁸ Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya, *Śrī Prajñāpāramitā Devīyāgu Sūtra: Śrī Ajimāyāgu Stotra*, 2nd edn (abbr. A), 1.

²⁹ A 16; Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya, *Śrī Prajñāpāramitā Ekaviṃśati Stotra*, pp. 53–78 in Aśa Saphu Kuthi DP no. 4075, ASK no. bada 06 (abbr. B), 67.

Newar Buddhism is a term used to refer to the tradition of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism practised by speakers of the Newar language, which developed in the Kathmandu Valley. This type of Buddhism comprised the literate, ceremonial, and esoteric Vajrayāna as well as the exoteric Mahāyāna found in northern India in the late first and early second millennia. Over time, owing to various historical and political factors, the esoteric priesthood of tantric priests (*vajrācāryas*) and monks (*śākyas*) solidified into caste-restrained hereditary roles. The *vajrācāryas* thus assumed the role of a hereditary priesthood, akin to Buddhist *brāhmaṇas*, with the *śākyas* and other Buddhist or semi-Hindu castes serving as their patrons.³⁰ One of the common practices that *vajrācāryas* officiate over is the public recitation (*pāṭha*) of *sūtras*.³¹ Closely connected to this is the practice of public storytelling for patrons and the laity, where, especially on fast days (*poṣadha*), *vajrācāryas* frequently practise either the reading or the improvisation of popular narrative literature such as Jātakas or Avadānas, generally localising or ‘domesticating’ that literature to make it fit the time and place in which it is being recited.³² It is within this narrative tradition that we find Niṣṭhānanda situated.

A quick note on names: while in publications it is common to refer to people by their surnames, in the case of Nepalese society this becomes difficult, because surnames double as caste or profession names. Thus, rather than ‘Vajrācārya’, I refer to the author of the text on which we shall be focusing as ‘Niṣṭhānanda’. For authors who popularly publish in English with established Romanised names, I use those spellings (e.g. Chittadhar Hridaya). Otherwise, I employ IAST spelling to maintain convertibility to Devanāgarī.

Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya: the Author of the Newar Translation and Commentary

Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya (1858–1935), with his prominent role in the project of the revival of the Newar language in prose (*gadya*), is widely regarded in Nepal as one of the four pillars of the temple of the Newar language (*nepāl bhāṣā degaḥyā pyamgaḥ thām*), with the others being the poet Siddhidās Amātya (1867–1929), the educator Jagat Sundar Malla (1882–1952), and the social reformer Yogbir Singh Kansakar (1885–1942).³³ Unlike these other figures, Niṣṭhānanda also doubles in a popular list of revivers of Buddhism in Nepal (*bauddha dharma-yā punarjāgarana*), with Niṣṭhānanda called the *reviver* (*punaruddhāraka*) of Nepalese Mahāyāna, Kenchen Lama (*fl.* 1924–1939) called the *re-establisher* (*punarsthāpaka*) of Buddhism, and Mahāprajñā (1900–1978) called the *founder* (*saṁsthāpaka*) of Theravāda Buddhism in Nepal.³⁴

Niṣṭhānanda (see Figure 1) was born in the district of Kathmandu’s Om Bāhāḥ in 1858 in a family of Buddhist tantric priests (*vajrācārya*). He married Ratnaprabha in 1873 at age 15, and had two children with whom he developed the habit of telling stories. By 1900, at the age

³⁰ David N. Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 21–22.

³¹ Alexander James O’Neill, ‘Textual Manifestations: The Use and Significance of Mahāyāna Literature in Newar Buddhism’, *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 54 (2020), 40.

³² Todd Lewis, *Popular Buddhist Texts from Nepal: Narratives and Rituals of Newar Buddhism* (State University of New York Press, 2000), 5; Todd Lewis, ‘Avadānas and Jātakas in the Newar Tradition of the Kathmandu Valley: Ritual Performances of Mahāyāna Buddhist Narratives’, *Religion Compass* 9, no. 8 (2015).

³³ Kāśīnāth Tamot, *Gadyagurū Pam. Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya va Vaykaḥyā ‘Lalitavistara’* (Cakanā Sāhitya Pālā, 1984), 2.

³⁴ Tamot, *Gadyagurū Pam*, 5.

of 42, he had established himself as an oral storyteller. The same year, his first wife died, and he married the daughter of a member of Kvā Bāhāḥ, a monastery in Lalitpur (just to the south of Kathmandu). From 1900 to 1903, he honed his writing skills while working as a curriculum writer for Nepali-language examinations in the Seti Zone in the far east of Nepal. Around this time, he apparently began telling renditions of popular narratives about the Buddha's life, such as the *Lalitavistara* and *Bhadrakalpāvadāna*, among others. Back in Kathmandu, crowds gathered as he narrated these stories at monasteries such as Jana Bāhāḥ.³⁵ At some point in the early 1900s, he also apparently began to see the value in printing his writings for dissemination.



Figure 1. Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya. Portrait by Juju Tulādhar. CC BY-SA 3.0.

³⁵ Tamot, *Gadyagurū Paṃ*, 4; Premhirā Tulādhar, *Gadyagurū Paṃ. Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya va Lalitavistara* (Niṣṭhānanda Smṛti Guthi, 2012), 2–4.

While woodblock printing disseminated broadly in Tibet starting in the 11th century, Nepalese print culture remained strictly manuscript-based until the 20th century. Professional manuscript copiers or religious specialists were employed to supply the valley's abundant monasteries and libraries. Printing presses first arrived in Nepal in 1815, but were under strict government control. Private printing had to be performed in Bengal or Benares. In this environment, Niṣṭhānanda had no choice but to procure a printing press from Calcutta for printing with Devanāgarī characters (until then, Newar was predominantly written in traditional Newar scripts such as Pracalit and Rañjanā). Having obtained and prepared his printing press, the very first Newar book printed with movable type was Niṣṭhānanda's *Ekaviṃśati* in 1909, followed by several other highly influential books, such as his renditions of the *Svayambhū-Purāṇa* and the *Lalitavistara*, a popular retelling of the life of the Buddha based on the Sanskrit original, in 1914. While this shift marked the start of a Newar literary renaissance (*nepālbhāṣyā punar-jagaṇa*) amidst the repression of the Newar language and culture, the focus on Devanāgarī with the new printing presses signified the end of the widespread use of traditional scripts.³⁶

The most significantly impactful of Niṣṭhānanda's works was his *Lalitavistara*, which, after being read and performed in public in 1924, inspired several Newar Buddhists to become ordained in the Tibetan tradition.³⁷ After it was reprinted by Min Bahadur Shakya in 1978, several Newar Buddhists were moved again to become ordained, but this time in the Theravāda tradition.³⁸ Conceivably even more popular than Niṣṭhānanda's retelling of the life of the Buddha was the epic poem inspired by it, *Sugata Saurabha* by Chittadhar Hridaya, written secretly while Hridaya was imprisoned for language activism by the Rāṇā regime in 1940–1941, and published in 1946.³⁹

Niṣṭhānanda continued printing by himself from 1909 until around 1922. At the nadir of the oppression of the Newar language and culture, publishing books in Newar was officially declared illegal in 1906, which significantly curtailed the amount of Newar literature that could be produced. While fines were levied, the strictest punishments came between the years 1940 and 1945, when, during the premiership of Juddha Śamśer Rāṇā, many Newar authors, such as Chittadhar Hridaya, Dharma Ratna Yami, and Siddhicharan Shrestha, were imprisoned.⁴⁰ Despite printing all of his books during this period of official Newar oppression, Niṣṭhānanda appears to have managed to pass the era unscathed and may have been condoned by the government, being granted an audience with the premier, Bhīm Śamśer Rāṇā, in c. 1929.⁴¹

For the remaining years of his life, Niṣṭhānanda taught children how to read and write at a library he established in Svayambhū (one of the major *caityas* of the Kathmandu valley)

³⁶ Christoph Emmrich, 'From Manuscript to Print in South and Southeast Asia', *Oxford Encyclopedia of Religion* (26 May 2021), <https://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-582>, 7–8.

³⁷ David N. Gellner and Sarah Levine, *Rebuilding Buddhism: The Theravada Movement in Twentieth-Century Nepal* (Harvard University Press, 2005), 31.

³⁸ Gellner and Levine, *Rebuilding Buddhism*, 41.

³⁹ Chittadhar Hridaya, *Sugata Saurabha: An Epic Poem from Nepal on the Life of the Buddha* by Chittadhar Hridaya, trans. Todd Lewis and Subarna Man Tulādhar (Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁴⁰ Siegfried Lienhard, *Songs of Nepal: An Anthology of Newar Folksongs and Hymns* (University of Hawai'i Press, 1984), 4.

⁴¹ Tamot, *Gadyagurū Pam*, 6.

and continued to practise the Dharma until his death in 1935.⁴² After his death, his impact was celebrated, and most of his works were re-edited; his translation of the *Bhadrakalpāvadāna* was published posthumously by Abhayānanda Vajrācārya in 1947.⁴³ In 1998, a bust of Niṣṭhānanda was installed near his former residence in Om Bāhāḥ, located to the south of the Hanuman Dhoka Palace in Kathmandu (see Figures 2 and 3).⁴⁴ However, his most lasting legacy was his prose style, with which, according to K.P. Malla and Hridaya, he not only showed the Newars how to write in colloquial Newar (facilitating the transition from Classical to Contemporary Newar)⁴⁵ but also awakened an awareness that Newar can be a living language with a rich literature.⁴⁶ As such, he was affectionately dubbed the ‘Prose Guru of the Newar Language’ (*nepāl bhāṣāyā gadyagurū*) by Chittadhar Hridaya,⁴⁷ an appellation that has stuck.



Figure 2. Om Bāhāḥ in 2022. Photo by Chandan Shakya.

⁴² Tamot, *Gadyagurū Pam*, 5; Tulādhar, *Gadyagurū Pam*, 6–7.

⁴³ Tamot, *Gadyagurū Pam*, 5.

⁴⁴ Gellner and Levine, *Rebuilding Buddhism*, 42n23.

⁴⁵ Kamal Prakash Malla, *Musaḥ Nibaḥdha* (Cvasāpāsa, 1963), ix.

⁴⁶ Chittadhar Hridaya, ‘Svargīya Paṇḍita Niṣṭhānanda Bajrācārya’, *Nepāl* 1, no. 6 (1966), 27.

⁴⁷ Hridaya, ‘Svargīya Paṇḍita Niṣṭhānanda Bajrācārya’, 26. *Gurū* with a long final -ū is a common spelling of *guru* in Newar.



Figure 3. Bust of Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya. Internet Archive, CC0.

Niṣṭhānanda's Translation and Commentary

While the first edition of Niṣṭhānanda's *Lalitavistara* was printed in *poṭhi* format,⁴⁸ it is unclear whether this was the case for his *Ekaviṃśati*, as its first edition is exceedingly rare. According to Kashinath Tamot, only the second edition and a scan of a handwritten copy (possibly from the first edition) are in circulation,⁴⁹ but the full title of the first edition is *Śrīprajñāpāramitādevīyāgu Ekavimsatislokayā Bhāṣāsahitam* (*Twenty-One Verses on Śrī Prajñāpāramitā Devī together with the Newar* ['Bhāṣā']). According to Premhirā Tulādhar, the date of the second edition is unknown (though it may be estimated to date no later than the 1920s), but it is unique in having a section called 'The Fruits of Reciting' (*pāṭha yānāguyā phala*) as a postface.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Emmrich, 'From Manuscript to Print', 8.

⁴⁹ Personal communication, July 2023.

⁵⁰ Tulādhar, *Gadyagurū Paṃ*, 4–5.



Figure 4. 2nd Edition, c. 1920s (witness A), p. 4.



Figure 5. ASK no. 4075, containing both Dharmaśāstra and Ekaviṃśati (witness B), pp. 53–54.

The two texts that we have available to work from, then, are the second edition, which circulates privately in the form of scans (abbr. A; see Figure 4), and the manuscript copy, housed at the Āśā Saphu Kuthi archive⁵¹ (abbr. B; see Figure 5). While B is copied with straightforward but unstandardised orthography—as is common in Newar even today—A is a unique example of the difficulties that Niṣṭhānanda must have faced in putting his work into print, clearly lacking the available type and letters to spell everything he intended (e.g., *y* is often used for *p*, *śr* for *śv* or *śc*, and other similar lexemes that look alike in Devanāgarī).

The text itself is both a translation and a commentary, a characteristic that stands out as unusual in modern translations, but which is the norm in Newar Buddhist practice.⁵² As such, the reader may notice that these terms are often used interchangeably because, in this case, they are. Niṣṭhānanda highlights translation's nature as a necessarily interpretative and commentarial act.⁵³

As far as the actual translation is concerned, the content of the two witnesses to the *Ekaviṃśati* is mostly identical, except that verse 5 is missing in A. Concerning paratextual material, A features a preface,⁵⁴ which serves as a second postface to B.⁵⁵ Both A and B also feature separate postfaces that are not shared. We have no reason to suppose that any of this paratextual material is not by Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya, as he likely prepared the printing of A. According to Tamot, B was copied in the hand of a professional scribe, who, in principle, would have copied what he saw in front of him, which may have been the first edition. This manuscript (witness B), a codex in Devanāgarī on typically bright yellow Nepalese paper treated with orpiment, features two texts. The first text is a Buddhist Dharmaśāstra of unknown provenance—further study of which is a desideratum, to determine if it is also a work of Niṣṭhānanda—and the second text is Niṣṭhānanda's *Ekaviṃśati*.

The preface to A, which is the second postface to B, serves perfectly to paratextually frame the reader's entry to the text, explaining that while there are five principal methods for attaining yogic knowledge (*samādhi*, austerities, worshipping *devatās*, the service of the knowledgeable, and *mantra* recitation), these are all difficult for those lacking sufficient merit. This type of address is intended to appeal to the average reader, the ordinary Buddhist, who may have found it challenging to achieve *samādhi*. While Niṣṭhānanda notes that such individuals are often encouraged to perform *pūjās* to secure the protection of the *devatās*, as an expedient for individuals not firmly established in the Dharma the Buddha has offered the *Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines (Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā)*, promising immense merit to anyone who recites it. In this way, Niṣṭhānanda entices the reader to be devoted to the *Prajñāpāramitā*, in precisely the same way that the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature entices its readers through self-referential passages.⁵⁶ Going further, in what is a revolutionary statement for a

⁵¹ ASK no. 4075.

⁵² Compare contemporary translations of Sanskrit Buddhist texts by Divyavājra Vajrācārya, e.g. *Āryagaṇḍavyūhasūtram* (Lotus Research Centre, 1996), or Jogmunī Vajrācārya, e.g. *Guṇakāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* (Nagarjuna Institute of Exact Methods, 1995).

⁵³ For an interesting theoretical discussion on these issues, see Lawrence Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism: A Translation Polemic* (University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

⁵⁴ A 2.

⁵⁵ Starting at B 78.

⁵⁶ Alexander James O'Neill, 'Self-Referential Passages in Mahāyāna Sutra Literature', *Pacific World*, 4th series, 1 (2020).

member of the hereditary tantric-priest class (i.e., a *vajrācārya*), Niṣṭhānanda states that just as devotion to deities does not free one from *saṃsāra*, *mantra* recitation with desire remaining does not result in liberation—this requires the relinquishment of desire and the attainment of the supreme fruit of omniscience that is expounded in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. This preface/postface also communicates Niṣṭhānanda's understanding of the *Ekaviṃśati* as, itself, a paratext pointing the reader to the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, a text to which the *Ekaviṃśati* is often appended as a preface.

The postface to B,⁵⁷ which is not found in A, is an excerpt of precisely one of those self-referential passages so abundant in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* that encourage the reader to read, worship, and teach the text. Such passages served as self-promotion strategies when the Mahāyāna literature was in its infancy and could not rely on the *sūtra*-recitation infrastructure of what was then mainstream *śrāvaka* Buddhism.⁵⁸ However, this time, the addressee is not just the human reader but also the *devas* and unseen non-human beings who will have gathered to hear the recitation. In addition to providing all beings who worship the *sūtra*, whether divine or mundane, with the text as a Dharma-gift (*dharmadāna*), the excerpt also promises that the reciter who recites the text of the postface 'will have eternal merit'. Thus, in a move that goes beyond Genette's model of paratextuality (where the paratext serves as a means to promote the referent text),⁵⁹ here the paratext itself is also praised. We might imagine the potential for an infinite regress of such paratexts.

The postface to A, which is not found in B, is a passage titled 'The Fruits of Reciting' (*pāṭha yānāguyā phala*). This section is not a quotation from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, but appears to be an original adaptation of similar passages of self-reference and praise, suggesting that the reciter of 'this book' (*thva sapu*)—the referent of which, in this case, is ambiguous, possibly suggesting the *Ekaviṃśati* itself—will be protected from an untimely death and calamity, and will be protected by divine beings. It also gives instructions on how to tell if a *devatā* has come: either one will see a bright light like a flash of lightning or smell a fine incense (the latter being a piece of trivia one will find within the text of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* itself).⁶⁰

Structurally, the translation itself takes the following form. Each verse is presented in Sanskrit. In A the Sanskrit is at the top of each page, whereas in B it comes before each section of the translation without starting a new page, divided by *daṇḍas* and a verse/section number. The translation follows the Sanskrit verse number and is marked in A by 'bhāṣā', i.e., Nepāl Bhāṣā (Newar). Niṣṭhānanda does not directly translate the verse line-by-line or word-by-word, but paraphrases it in ways that are reminiscent of the *vajrācārya* didactics and pedagogical style discussed by Todd Lewis,⁶¹ featuring narrative elaboration, improvisation, and domestication. Thus, this 'translation' should be seen as an elaboration that allows us to see how an innovative Newar *vajrācārya* at the start of the 20th century understood and taught about the *Prajñāpāramitā* and how he understood its place within the doctrinal and ritual paradigms of Newar Buddhism—as a realisation, but also as a goddess (*devī*) and a book to be worshipped.

⁵⁷ B 77.

⁵⁸ O'Neill, 'Self-Referential Passages', 54–57.

⁵⁹ Genette, *Paratexts*.

⁶⁰ Vaidya, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, 44 and 258.

⁶¹ Lewis, 'Avadānas and Jātakas'.

In contrast, the original Sanskrit *Ekaviṃśati* hints at these themes and uses the goddess as a rhetorical device in much the same way as the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*. However, as Jacob Kinnard has shown, it was not really until the 9th century that the goddess form of the *Prajñāpāramitā* came into its own as an object of worship.⁶² In this and many other ways, Niṣṭhānanda's expression is particularly Newar in its approach. It needs to be understood and appreciated on its own terms, rather than as a mere reproduction into Newar of a Sanskrit original.

To begin analysing Niṣṭhānanda's translation/commentary directly with a few overall observations: for the most part he manages to express, though in many more words, the import of the Sanskrit passages, but occasionally his own understanding or agenda causes him to deviate from it. Each translation echoes the Sanskrit in addressing the *Prajñāpāramitā* personally in the second person (*chalapola*) either as *Prajñāpāramitā* or as Mother (*he mātā*, 'O Mother'). Moreover, while the verses refer just to *Prajñāpāramitā*, maintaining its ambiguous identity as a goddess, a text, and an attainment, Niṣṭhānanda specifically refers to it/her as a *devī* in the title,⁶³ preface,⁶⁴ and final verse.⁶⁵

To further the personal theological/Buddhological theme, while the verses use the term 'see' (*paśyati*) to refer to seeing the *Prajñāpāramitā* in an abstract sense, Niṣṭhānanda brings in the more theological term *darśana* rather than the conventional Newar *svaye* (to highlight this, the former is rendered in this translation as 'beholding'). *Darśana* is more commonly used in Hindu settings to refer to a gaze upon a deity's image that can confer blessings on the viewer,⁶⁶ reflecting Niṣṭhānanda's wish to emphasise the nature of the *Prajñāpāramitā* as a *devī* from the perspective of a *vajrācārya* within a majority Hindu state. However, he does not downplay the traditional scriptural implications of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, continuing to maintain that seeing it implies attaining omniscience.⁶⁷ Niṣṭhānanda also addresses his audience (who, as is common in Newar Buddhist circles, are likely to have mixed devotion to non-Buddhist deities), suggesting that *Prajñāpāramitā* manifests as *devīs* such as Durgā, Kālī, Bhavānī, and Bhagavatī,⁶⁸ and frequently mentioning the relative powerlessness of great *devatās* like Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Mahādeva.⁶⁹

As a final broad observation, many of Niṣṭhānanda's commentarial translations serve a didactic purpose, explaining complicated or scholastic terms to a general audience. For example, besides glossing Sanskrit terms with colloquial Newar terms, in A (but not B) he explains the six *pāramitās*⁷⁰ and the differences between *buddhas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and *śrāvakas*.⁷¹ It should be understood that Newar, although a Tibeto-Burman language, utilises a vocabulary that can consist of up to 25% Sanskrit loans (called *tatsamas*) or Middle Indo-Aryan loans

⁶² Jacob N. Kinnard, *Imaging Wisdom: Seeing and Knowing in the Art of Indian Buddhism* (Routledge, 1999), 133.

⁶³ A 1 B 75.

⁶⁴ A 2 B 78.

⁶⁵ A 24 B 75.

⁶⁶ Diana L. Eck, *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (Columbia University Press, 1998).

⁶⁷ A 8 B 56.

⁶⁸ A 12 B 61.

⁶⁹ A 23 B 74.

⁷⁰ A 11.

⁷¹ A 20 B 71.

(called *tadbhavas*).⁷² Thus, much of the lexical content of the original verses will be understandable to a typical Newar reader. So, while most of Niṣṭhānanda's commentarial translation explicates the more technical words in this manner, he also devotes some time to original exposition based on the verses, to which we shall now turn our attention.

Niṣṭhānanda views the Prajñāpāramitā as an object of devotion, but also as a subject of meditation by a *yogī* (*jogī*), even when the root verses do not necessarily dwell on meditation, as in verse 2,⁷³ where Niṣṭhānanda asserts that knowing and seeing the Prajñāpāramitā beyond words means seeing emptiness and suchness in meditation. Further, he equates that vision itself with the worship of both the Prajñāpāramitā and the *tathāgatas*, who, echoing verse 3, he indicates should be known as identical.⁷⁴ Despite this early emphasis on devotion, as noted in his preface Niṣṭhānanda also highlights the Buddha's compassion for those who are devoted (*bhaktajana*), and it is this devotion that, in verse 5, Niṣṭhānanda begins to identify directly with *darśana*, or devoted viewing. While the Sanskrit specifically sees unfailing beholding (*amoghadarśana*) as an attainment that results from seeing the Prajñāpāramitā, Niṣṭhānanda turns this around to identify it with the devotee's vision—implying that such vision is unfailing (*amogha*) in granting the devotee the fruit of liberation (*mokṣaphala*).

In very few instances, Niṣṭhānanda appears to deviate from the meaning of the Sanskrit. He seems to have some trouble with the more paradoxical verses. In verse 13, while the point of the Sanskrit is that the wise (*bodhisattvas*) do not apprehend anything corresponding to the Prajñāpāramitā, Niṣṭhānanda resubstantialises the matter, suggesting that 'When *yogīs* are performing *samādhi* without discriminations, they see that you are pervading everywhere.'⁷⁵ In verse 14, when the Sanskrit suggests that despite not seeing anything, practitioners who resort to or rely on (*prapadyante*) the Prajñāpāramitā will be liberated, Niṣṭhānanda indicates that there are some people and *yogīs* who *can* still see the Prajñāpāramitā and be liberated if they have devotion despite not having discriminated (*saṃkalpavikalpa*) the Prajñāpāramitā. While the Sanskrit does reintroduce seeing in the next verse, 15, Niṣṭhānanda wishes to read it back into 13 and 14. Niṣṭhānanda's explanation of verse 15, which is rather terse, also appears to expand on the meaning of the verse in a way that is not supported by the Sanskrit, but that can conceivably be thought of as consistent with Prajñāpāramitā thought: he asserts that there is a difference between seeing with and without greed and hatred—with them, one remains bound in *saṃsāra*, whereas without them, one is liberated.

Overall, in a broad assessment concerning most of these verses, Niṣṭhānanda offers fascinating interpretations that provide a striking insight into the mind of one of the visionaries of the Newar Buddhist renaissance. Returning to the primary theme of the work, that of devotion, in his commentarial translation of verses 20 and 21,⁷⁶ Niṣṭhānanda expands on the root verse in a manner broadly consistent with Prajñāpāramitā thought, suggesting that anyone who reads this praise will quickly attain *nirvāṇa*. This reminds one of the earlier suggestion that this is an expedient compassionate dispensation by the Buddha to assist frustrated sentient beings

⁷² Kamal Prakash Malla, Tej Ratna Kansakar, and Kashinath Tamot, eds., *A Dictionary of Classical Newari: Compiled from Manuscript Sources* (Cvasāpāsā, 2000), xii–xiii.

⁷³ A 6 B 54.

⁷⁴ A 7 B 55.

⁷⁵ A 16 B 67.

⁷⁶ A 23–24 B 74–75.

mired in *saṃsāra*. It also positions the work, and potentially Niṣṭhānanda's commentarial translation, as an instrumental work that can liberate the reader. This interpretation is reinforced by the framing of the text at the close by the 'ye dharmā hetu' verse—which is typically used after *sūtra* recitations (*pāṭhā*)—as well as by the two postfaces on the benefits of recitation, which will remind readers not only of self-referentiality in Mahāyāna literature, but also of the *phalaśruti* (statement of benefits) passages in Purāṇa literature.⁷⁷

A Linguistic Analysis of Niṣṭhānanda's Commentary

Niṣṭhānanda's work is, in essence, very linguistically modern. If we look for typical marks of Classical Newar, such as the antecedent converb *yāñāva*, we see that Niṣṭhānanda uses modern forms, like *yāñā*. However, a few elements are continuities from Classical Newar. One that I have already mentioned is the final *-sa* for the locative, found throughout the commentary, which in contemporary Newar is usually written using the final *-e*, *-ay*, or *-i*, all of which Niṣṭhānanda also uses. In addition, Niṣṭhānanda uses the Classical reflexive pronouns *thava* and *thama*, which in contemporary Newar are usually written *thaḥ*. Thus, to an extent, Niṣṭhānanda's work is still in a linguistically transitional state. However, only a complete diachronic corpus analysis will enable us to say for sure when these shifts became solidified.

Editing and Translating Niṣṭhānanda's Commentary

This publication attempts to present an edition of Niṣṭhānanda's *Ekaviṃśati* that balances historical orthography with accessibility and readability—when the two sources differ, I choose the most readable version from the perspective of modern Newar—and uses it as the basis for a translation into English.

Regarding the edition, it is presented in the next section on the left-hand side, with page and line numbers from A given in square brackets, and from B given in parentheses. At the outset, it is essential to remember that Newar, even today, does not have a standardised orthography, and that this was even more the case with historical Newar, whether classical or early contemporary. Moreover, there are no established standards for editing Newar texts, and early editions of late classical Newar texts sacrificed orthographic standardisation for pronounceability.⁷⁸ This practice neither perfectly conveys pronunciation nor allows for back-transcription to Devanāgarī, and thus is increasingly out of favour among scholars of Newar, who are now tending to opt for the IAST transliteration scheme behind which Indologists have come to put their weight for the past century.⁷⁹ This edition utilises the IAST transliteration scheme. Readers should be mindful that the edition uses a strictly orthographic transcription and not a phonetic transcription. Thus, *tadbhavas* (mainly from Hindī or Nepālī) and *tatsamas* (from Sanskrit) that are pronounced without an inherent *-a* in contemporary Newar are written with the inherent *-a* when the source texts did not have a *halanta/virama* to mark its absence orthographically,

⁷⁷ McComas Taylor, 'Heavenly Carrots and Earthly Sticks: How Phalaśruti Paratexts Empower Purāṇic Discourse', *Journal of Hindu Studies* 5, no. 1 (2012), 92.

⁷⁸ E.g., Hans Jørgensen, ed., *Batīsaputrikākathā: The Tales of the Thirty-two Statuettes, a Newārī Recension of the Simhāsanadvātriṃśatikā* (Ejnar Munksgaard, 1939); Siegfried Lienhard, ed., *Mañicūḍāvadānoddhṛta: A Buddhist Re-birth Story in the Newārī Language* (Almquist and Wiskell, 1963).

⁷⁹ Alexander James O'Neill and Marieke Meelen, 'The Diachronic Annotated Corpus of Newar: From Manuscript to Morphosyntax', *Cahier de Linguistique Asie Orientale* (2024), 9.

and readers familiar with Newar will be able to identify these words and read the IAST as they would the Devanāgarī (e.g. IAST *aneka* as IPA $a\eta e:k$, IAST *cījabīja* as IPA $\hat{t}\hat{j}i:d\hat{z}bi:d\hat{z}$, etc.).⁸⁰

However, a strict transliteration from Devanāgarī using text A poses several difficulties. When printing the text, the compositor evidently lacked the complete set of letters for proper transcription, so graphemes that look similar are often substituted for one another (for example, *y* for *p*, *v* for *b*, *śr* for *śv* or *śc*, etc.). In this edition, these substitutions are not regarded as errors or variants but are taken to represent their usual graphemes. Moreover, Newar typically allows for a wide range of orthographic variation, making it difficult to designate anything as definitively incorrect. Consequently, this edition retains these common variants as far as is reasonable. For instance, *gabalyam* and *gabalem* are both acceptable forms because the phonemes *ya* and *e* are phonetically identical in Newar. Likewise, *va* and *o* are phonetically identical, and it is not unusual for a single source to use both variants of the same word interchangeably.

That said, certain spellings prevail in modern Newar. Where A and B differ, and one aligns more closely with contemporary usage, this edition adopts the more modern form for readability and accessibility (for example, *e* is now more common than *ya*, so if there is a difference such as *gabalyam* versus *gabalem*, or *yāya* versus *yāye*, this edition uses the latter). The graphemes *v* and *b*, however, can be more problematic: they are often used indiscriminately, and while there may not always be a distinction in pronunciation, an initial *v* is, in principle, pronounced as an IPA *b*, whereas a *b* within a word is pronounced closer to an IPA *v*. Hence, if a choice must be made between transcribing *thaba* or *thava*, this edition prefers *thava*. Meanwhile, other variants, such as *r* and *l*, are broadly tolerated. These orthographic variations occur so frequently that they should be assumed to exist and will not be noted at every instance.⁸¹

By contrast, any variant that suggests a substantial difference in meaning, or where one source text lacks material found in the other, is recorded in the edition's apparatus. Choosing between two variants does not imply that those not selected are incorrect. In general, variants not chosen are not considered wrong; they often provide equally valid readings. Instead, the text is edited for ease of reference and translation, and the presence of two variants has frequently proved highly beneficial in this process.

Another alteration from the source material in the edition has been the introduction of spaces for the sake of improved readability. Newar manuscripts were written in *scriptio continua*. While text A has spacing, it is not as much as we would find in contemporary Newar today, and often what appears to be a space is a gap required for fitting in all of the graphemes, due to the unrefined type. Text B is written in *scriptio continua* but features markings, typical in manuscripts, to indicate separate words (sometimes referred to as 'half *daṇḍas*'). These

⁸⁰ This method prioritises orthographic consistency but will clash with systems for transcription of modern Indic languages like Hindī, which encourage a contradiction between transcription and Devanāgarī and are neither perfectly phonetic nor orthographic transcriptions (cf. R.S. McGregor, *Outline of Hindi Grammar*, Oxford University Press, 1986, xxiv–xxv). Newar has no established methodology like this and has been in constant dispute. This edition's methodology is just one of many possible approaches.

⁸¹ At the 20th IABS Congress at Leipzig University, Bastian Jantke argued for broad tolerance of these kinds of variants in 'Newarized' Buddhist Sanskrit as well (somewhat as an antithesis to common philological instincts), in an exemplary talk entitled 'Editing and Translating "Newarized" Buddhist Sanskrit: Challenges and Approaches with Samples from Nepalese Buddhist *Tīrthamāhātmyas*' (12 August 2025).

markers, like the spaces in text A, do not always indicate words that would be separated in contemporary Newar, and sometimes appear in places one would not expect. For the most part, this edition does not directly reproduce this spacing or marking and attempts to separate words in a manner that appears most consistent with contemporary Newar spacing conventions today.

As for the Sanskrit passages quoted by Niṣṭhānanda, his spelling featured variants acceptable in Newar but less common in Sanskrit. The edition mostly corrects these to conform with what is found in Hahn's edition,⁸² but minor variants in Niṣṭhānanda's rendering that help us understand his interpretation of the text have been retained, as will be noted in the annotation. For clarity, translations from the Sanskrit are rendered into English in bold type, whereas Newar is rendered in non-bold type. At points where Niṣṭhānanda reuses words or expressions found in the Sanskrit, the translations are rendered in bold, and the Sanskrit equivalent is given in parentheses if it was used word-for-word by Niṣṭhānanda. Readers will see that the first postface reproduces *in toto* a passage from the Sanskrit *Aṣṭāsāhasrikā*, the translation of which, accordingly, is presented in bold.

The translation of the Newar, which will be found on the right-hand side in the next section, is a literal translation with minor adjustments made for readability, so that readers and students of Newar can follow along in both languages. For the inevitable infelicities which result from a literal rendering of a language with such a different structure to English as Newar, I ask the reader's patience. Non-English words which readers familiar with Buddhism would likely know, such as *Prajñāpāramitā* and *devatā*, are retained in their original forms. When it refers specifically to the text, *Prajñāpāramitā* is italicised, and when it generally refers to the goddess, religious attainment, or is ambiguous, it is not italicised.

Abbreviations and Sigla

- A Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya, *Śrī Prajñāpāramitā Devīyāgu Sūtra: Śrī Ajimāyāgu Stotra*, 2nd edn (c. 1920s).
- B Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya, *Śrī Prajñāpāramitā Ekaviṃśati Stotra*, pp. 53–78 in Āśā Sapu Kuthi DP no. 4075, ASK no. bada 06.
- Nep. Nepālī.
- Skt Sanskrit.
- T Junjirō Takakusu, Kaigyoku Watanabe, et al., eds., *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*, 100 vols. Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1934. References to the *Taishō* follow this format: *Taishō*. Text no. 2058. Page 319. Row C. Line 14. Volume number is not always included, but when it is, it comes after the initial T.

⁸² Hahn, 'Zwei Texte'.

The Edition and Translation

[1]¹

[Handwritten:] pra prajñāpāramitā

|| śrī prajñāpāramitā devīyāgu sūtra ||
|| śrī ajimāyāgu stotra ||
|| va[m] bāhālasa cvanamha niṣṭhānan-
dayāke³ du ||

The Prajñāpāramitā²

A *Sūtra* of Śrī Prajñāpāramitā Devī
The Praise of the Śrī Ajimā
By Niṣṭhānanda of Oṃ Bāhāḥ

[2](78₅)⁴

oṃ namaḥ śrī prajñāpāramitāyai ||
|| saṃsāre yoga jñāna lāyagu nyāgu upāya du
|| samādhi 1 tapasyā 2 devatāpūjana 3 jñāni-
yāgu sevā 4 maṃtraajāpa yāyagu 5 thva nyāgu
lāyata mahākaṣṭha || janma 2 pattiṃ yānā
vayāgu punyayāgu phala madayakaṃ
samādhiyāgu jñān lāi makhu punyahīna
jusyaṃ li cittaṇaṃ dṛḍha jui makhu || athyayā
niṃtiṃ devatāpiṃta pūjā yāyamāla || pūjā
yātasā jaka devatāpiṃta prasanna juyā rakṣā
yāi || gvalota satya dharmasa (79) macvana
valota parameśvarapisaṃ prīti tāi makhu
adhyayā niṃtiṃ śrī bhagavānaṃ upāyanaṃ
lokapīṃta aṣṭasaḥśrikā śrī prajñāpāramitā
puṣṭaka dayakā varadāna biyā bijyāta || suno⁵
śrī prajñāpāramitā devīyāgu pāṭha yāi vayāta
nānā prakārayā punya phala lāi dhakā śrī
bhagavānaṃ pratijñā yānā bijyākagu
jūyāniṃtiṃ⁶ thva saphu [3] pāṭha yānāgulīṃ
ananta punya lāi||

OM Homage to Śrī Prajñāpāramitā!

There are five methods of obtaining knowledge of *yoga* in the world: (1) *samādhi*, (2) austerities, (3) the worship of *devatās*, (4) the service of the knowledgeable, and (5) the recitation of *mantras*; it is exceedingly difficult to obtain these five. For those who come to be born lacking the fruit of merit, the knowledge of *samādhi* will not be attained; since they are deficient in merit, their minds will not be firm. In such a case, they must do *pūjās* to the *devatās*. If they just do *pūjās*, the *devatās*, being pleased, will protect them. For anyone not established in the true Dharma, for whom the highest lord [*devatās*] do not have affection, for their sakes, the Śrī Bhagavān created the book of the Śrī *Prajñāpāramitā in Eight Thousand Lines* as an expedient and presented it as the choicest gift to the populace. In order that whoever recites from the Śrī Prajñāpāramitā Devī will obtain various kinds of merit, the Śrī Bhagavān promised that those who so practise will obtain infinite merit after reciting that book.

¹ Page and line numbers from A are given in square brackets, and from B are given in parentheses.

² The source text has a handwritten title underlined, which probably functions as a strikethrough. In Newar practice, one does not strikethrough in the middle of writing but uses either underlines or marks above the text.

³ A 1 niṣṭhānandayāke. Literally ‘with/of Niṣṭhānanda, who dwells in Oṃ Bāhāḥ’. In the translation, I have rendered this in a more conventional way as attributing authorship and place of origin.

⁴ While appearing as a preface to A, the following serves as a second postface to B, starting at 78₅. For the first postface in B, please see after the main body of the *stotra*. The postface to A will follow the first postface of B.

⁵ Var. of sunaṃ.

⁶ B 79₉₋₁₀ juyāniṃtiṃ.

|| hānaṃ pāṭha yāyaguyā¹ bheda du ||
gumhasyā² 2 iṣṭadevatā brahmā viṣṇu³ ma-
heśvarādi || gumhasyā⁴ 2 iṣṭadevatā buddha
dharma saṃgha piṃ gumhasyā⁵ (80) gumha
2 devatāyāgu pāṭha yāi umhasyāta umha
umha devatāpisaṃ mitrabhāva yāi || umha
umha devatāyāgu bhuvanasa vāsa lāi ||

|| hākanaṃ thamam 2 yānāgu punyayāgu
phalam chagū niyatakālasaṃma svarga vāsa
yānā bhoga phuyava hākanaṃ pṛthivī⁶
maṃḍalesaṃtu janma jū vai || thumita janma
maraṇam gabalyam⁷ chutaye jui makhu ||
jadi⁸ brahmā⁹ viṣṇu mahādeva dhāyakā jan-
ma jūsānam tapas yāyāgu bhoga phuyava
phera¹⁰ hākanaṃ pṛthivī maṃḍalesaṃtu janma
ju vai || athyayā niṃtim jñānījanapisam (81)
janma maraṇam chutaya juyā mokṣa van-
yagu icchā yāi thumhasye sakāma maṃtra
yāta || arthāt icchā māphika¹¹ phala byūgu
sakā[4]ma maṃtra yāta chuṃ prayojana tai
makhu || sakāma maṃtram¹² kevala svarga-
saṃma phala lāi mokṣaphala lāi makhu ||
mokṣaphala lāyagu icchā dusā niṣkāmanāyā
kāmanā yāyamate kāmanā madayava ka-
thathye sarvajñatva phala lānā mokṣa phala
lāi dhakā śrībhagavane ājñā dayakā bijyāta¹³
||¹⁴

Moreover, there are differences regarding recitation. For some people, it is to the tutelary deities Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśvara, and so forth. For some people, it is to the tutelary deities of the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha. Whichever deities one recites to, those deities will become friendly to one, and [those who so recite] will go to dwell in that deity's heaven.

However, having dwelt in heaven for a limited time, after consuming the fruits of one's merits, one will again be born on earth. One will never be liberated from birth and death. If one is born as a Brahmā, Viṣṇu, or Mahādeva, then after exhausting the profits of one's austerities, one will again be born on earth. Considering this, intelligent people will wish to go to liberation, where birth and death are cut off, and they perform *mantras* with desire.¹⁵ This means they perform *mantras* with desire for fruit according to their wishes, [but] this is of no use [for liberation]. By *mantras* with desire, one can only obtain fruit up to heaven, but one cannot obtain the fruit of liberation. If one wishes to obtain the fruit of liberation, one must not have any desires. Then, being without desire, in due course, having obtained the fruit of omniscience, one will obtain the fruit of liberation: thus taught the Śrī Bhagavān.

¹ A 3₂ B 79₁₁ yāyaguyām.

² A 3₂ gumhasyām.

³ A 3₂ viṣṇa.

⁴ A 3₃ B 79₁₃ gumhasyām.

⁵ A 3₄ B 79₁₄ gumhasyam.

⁶ A 3₈ B 80₇ pṛthivi.

⁷ A 3₉ B 80₈₋₉ balyem.

⁸ Skt *yadi*, 'if'.

⁹ A 3₁₀ bahma.

¹⁰ Nepālī (abbr. Nep.) 'again', 'time'.

¹¹ Hindī muāphik, 'according to', 'pursuant to'.

¹² A 4₁ maṃtre.

¹³ A 4₅ bijyā.

¹⁴ B 81₁₁ no *daṇḍa*.

¹⁵ Without a negation, it seems this sentence would match the next one.

[5](534)

॥ ॥ om namaḥ śrīprajñāpāramitāyai ॥ ॥

OM Homage to the Śrī Prajñāpāramitā!

॥ ॥ nirvikalpe namas tubhyaṃ
prajñāpāramite 'mite ॥
yā tvaṃ sarvānavadyāṅgi
niravadyair nirīkṣyase ॥ 1 ॥¹

**Homage to you, Prajñāpāramitā, who are
without discriminations and infinite!
You, whose limbs are entirely faultless,
are contemplated by those who are
faultless. (1)**

²omkārasvarūpī³ śrīprajñāpāramitāyāta na-
maskāra ॥

**Homage to Śrī Prajñāpāramitā, whose
own form is the letter OM!**

॥ ॥ bhāṣā⁴ ॥ ॥

Newar

⁵prajñāpāramite ॥ sakalajñānaṃ⁶ purṇa juyā
bijyākamha he prajñāpāramitā jiṃ chal-
apolayāta namaskāra yānā ॥⁷ chalapola gāthi-
mmha dhālasā ॥ nirvikalpa saṃkalpa vikalpa
⁸ madugu nirvikalpa samādhi yānā bi-
jyākamha ⁹chalapolayāta ¹⁰saṃkalpa vikalpa
mayāse nirvikalpa samādhi yānā cvaṃpiṃ¹¹
yo(54)gījanapisamṃ jaka chalapolayāta
darśana yāi ¹²chalapola amita ॥ chalapola-
yāgu rūpa thathyacomṃ athyacomṃ dhakā
sunānaṃ anta kāya maphu ॥¹³ tabala¹⁴ nāpa
chumṃ madu thathimha chalapolayāta nirdoṣo
jogījanapisamṃ jaka darśana yāye phai doṣīja-
nayāta darśana madu ॥ 1 ॥

To Prajñāpāramitā, who is full of omnisci-
ence! O Prajñāpāramitā! I pay homage to
you! Of what manner are you? **Without dis-
criminations** (*nirvikalpa*): only the *yogīs*
performing the *samādhi* of non-discrimina-
tion without intention or discrimination to-
wards you—who are without intention or
discrimination and who perform the *samādhi*
of non-discrimination—will behold you; you
are **infinite** (*amita*). No one can grasp your
end, saying your form is ‘like this’ or ‘like
that’. Only those *yogīs* who are faultless can
behold you who are peerless—faulty people
do not behold you. (1)

¹ In this and each succeeding Sanskrit verse, A and B largely conform to Hahn, ‘Zwei Texte’, and Nalinaksha Dutt, ed., *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā: Edited with Critical Notes and Introduction* (Luzac, 1934). I have corrected minor errors to accord with Hahn and Dutt’s editions. Separate *pādas* are given new lines. In A and B the quadruple *daṇḍas* appear in some lines, but not all; for consistency of formatting, they are here given for every line.

² B omits this line.

³ A 54 omkāraśvarūpī.

⁴ I.e., Nepāla Bhāṣā: what follows is in Newar.

⁵ B₇ he ...

⁶ B 53₇₋₈ sakalajñānaguṇamṃ.

⁷ A *nodanḍas*.

⁸ B 53₁₂ chumṃ ...

⁹ B 53₁₃ thathimṃha ...

¹⁰ B 53₁₃₋₁₄ rāga dveṣayāta totā ...

¹¹ A 5₁₁ copimṃ.

¹² B 54₂₋₃ ॥ doṣījanapisamṃ darśana yāya phai makhu ॥ ‘Faulty people cannot behold you.’ In A this sentence is moved to later in the section.

¹³ B 54₃₋₅ finishes the section this way. A omits the sentence from *chalapolayāgu* to the double *daṇḍa* and continues with the following sentence. The foregoing sentence might have been omitted in the later version since it might have been a misunderstanding of *sarvānavadyāṅgi*.

¹⁴ Nep. var. tabaḥ.

[6](54₅)

॥ ॥ ākāśam iva nirlepāṃ
niṣprapañcāṃ nirakṣarāṃ ॥
yas tvāṃ paśyati bhāvena
sa paśyati tathāgatam ॥ 2 ॥

॥ ॥ bhāṣā ॥ ॥

**Like space, unstained, free from falsehood
and free from letters;¹
One who sees you truly, sees the
Tathāgata. (2)**

Newar

he prajñāpāramitā gathya ākāśa nirlepa ॥
aneka prakārayā lepanānaṃ lipta maju
suyāguṃ saṃgatanam mayā ॥ niṣprapañca
aneka prakārayā paripaṃcanānaṃ makhu
arthāt sunānaṃ dayakā dumhaṃ makhu
āphaiśvasii ॥ nirakṣara akṣara śvarūpanam
makhu athavā śabdaśvarūpanam makhu kev-
alathavagu śvarūpasa sadā kālam thīra juyā
bijyākamha thathimma (55) chalapola
dhakāsīkā gumhasye² darśayāi ॥ hānaṃ thva-
thyam tathāgata arthat śrībhagavānayatāṃ
śīkā bhāvanam³ sahita yānā bhajanā yāi thva-
mhasem tathatā ॥ arthat śūnyatāsa bijyānā
comma tathāgatayāṃgu darśanaḥ⁴ natara⁴
darśana yāye phai makhu⁵ ॥ 2 ॥

O Prajñāpāramitā! How are you **unstained** (*nirlepa*) [like] **space** (*ākāśa*)? Not being soiled by stains of many kinds, you are not associated with anyone. **Free from falsehood** (*niṣprapañca*): being without falsehood⁶ of various kinds means not being crafted by anyone, self-existent. **Free from words** (*nirakṣara*): not having your own form in letters or not having your own form in words, you are the only one whose own form is eternally firm; one who is made to know you thus is one who will see you. Moreover, one who reveres you,⁷ having meditated in a state of *tathatā*, also knows the Tathāgata—meaning the Śrī Bhagavān. This means that one who abides in emptiness will obtain vision of the Tathāgata; otherwise, one cannot behold him. (2)

¹ Hahn renders this as ‘unvergänglich’, ‘imperishable’ (‘Zwei Texte’, 62). In fact, unnegated, *akṣara* could be read as ‘imperishable’, but here the term is negated (‘not-the-imperishable’, i.e., ‘without words’). Letters being referred to as ‘the imperishable’ reflects their role as fundamental, unchanging units of sound, signifying their eternal and indestructible nature, consistent with the theology of sound expressed in the Vedas and Upaniṣads (e.g. *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* 1.1).

² B 55₁ gumhasyam.

³ While the ergative can function to create an adverb of the manner in the same sense as the instrumental adverb in Sanskrit, it appears Niṣṭhānanda is here interpreting *bhāvena* as being related to *bhāvana*, or meditation.

⁴ Nep. var. natra.

⁵ B 55₃₋₅ tathatā arthat śūnyatāsa bijyātā comma tathāgatanam darśana lāi dhakasīki ॥ ‘Suchness means that one who abides in emptiness will obtain a beholding of even (emph.) the Tathāgata; they know you thus.’

⁶ Nep. paripañca = Skt *prapañca*.

⁷ Or, ‘will sing praises’.

[7](55₅)

|| || tava cārye guṇādhyāyā
buddhasya ca jagadguroḥ ||
na paśyanty antaram santaś
candracandrikayor iva || 3 ||

|| || bhāṣā || ||

he prajñāpāramitā thva saṃsāre gulita uttama
juyā coṃgu vastu dayāconā ulimadhe chal-
apola śreṣṭha tathāgata jagatayā guru || chal-
apolayāgu va tathāgatayāgu mahimā yogīja-
napisaṃ naṃ aṃtakāye maphu sinaṃ masyū
gathya dhālasā candramā va candramāyāgu
kiraṇa arthat candramā va tuimilā va chuṃ
pharaka² madu (56) || gathya manuṣyapisam
suryya athavā caṃdramā śvaibale thumigu
mikhāṃ candrasuryya makhamtale can-
drasuryyanaṃ thvaṃ mata khani makhu ||
caṃdrasuryyayāgu rasmiṃ thumita khaśval-
etini thumisaṃ caṃdrasuryanaṃ khani
yatothyam gumha manuṣya śrīprajñāpāra-
mitā darśanayāta || thvamhasam tathāgata-
naṃ darśana lāi || tathāgata va || prajñā-
pāramitā va || chuṃ pharaka³ madu nimham
chamha dhakāsikā bhajanāyā || 3 ||

**And, O noble one, between you, who are
rich in qualities, and the Buddha, the
world's teacher,
The wise do not see a difference, just like
the moon and moonlight.¹ (3)**

Newar

O Prajñāpāramitā! In this world, the highest thing is you, the best, and the Tathāgata, the world's teacher. Even *yogīs* cannot find a difference between your glory and that of the *tathāgatas*; if it is asked how even they do not know [a difference], it is [like] the moon and the light of the moon; that is, there is no difference between the moon and [its] shine. How could humans, when observing the sun or the moon, not see the moon or sun with their own eyes? Or not see the light of the moon or sun? Just by looking⁴ at the rays of the moon or sun, thus they see the moon or sun. In just that manner, the human who sees the Śrī Prajñāpāramitā will also see the Tathāgata. There is no difference between the Tathāgata and the Prajñāpāramitā. The two should be known and worshipped as one.⁵ (3)

¹ The *Ekaviṃśati* may be the source of the metaphor of the moon and moonlight as signifying non-duality, but it also appears in the *Śivapurāṇa* (7.2.4.9): *yathā śivas tathā devī yathā devī tathā śivaḥ | nānāyor aṃtaram vidyāc caṃdracandrikayor iva* || 'As is Śiva, so is the Devī; as is the Devī, so is Śiva. One should not know any difference between the two, as between the moon and moonlight.'

² Nep. pharak.

³ Nep. pharak.

⁴ kha(na)-svale-tini.

⁵ The numbers here take the animate classifier. Moreover, *bhajanāyā* can also be taken as singing praises.

[8](569)

|| || kṛpātmakāḥ prapadya tvāṃ
buddhadharmapuraḥsarīm ||
sukhenāyānti māhātmyam
atulaṃ bhaktivatsale || 4 ||¹

**The tender-hearted, having gone forth to
you, the foremost essence of the Bud-
dha-dharmas,²
Easily attain unequalled magnanimity, O
you who are affectionate to devotees.
(4)**

|| || bhāṣā || ||

Newar

he prajñāpāramitā chalapola gathimṃha
dhālasā buddhayāgu dharmayā nhyonhyo bi-
jyānā lokapiṃta svargamārga bhaktamārga
va yanā bijyākamha thathimṃha chal-
apolayāta jogījanapisam darśana yānā sarva
jñatvapada lānā vana chalapolayā kṛpāṃ
jogī(57)janapi dakvaṃ dayāvānakṣamādhāri
juyā sukha ānaṃdanamṭā tulya madayā
comgu anuttarajñāna lānā mahāpurūṣa
dhāyakā mokṣapada lānā vana chalapola
bhaktivatsala || sunāṃ chalapolayāta bhajanā
yāi thvamha bhaktajanayāta chalapolam
sadāṃ dayā tayā pālanāpoṣaṇā yānā rakṣā
yānā bijyākamha chalapola || 4 ||³

O Prajñāpāramitā! If it is asked what you are like: being at the fore of the Buddha's Dharma, you lead the world on the path to heaven, the path of devotion, and thus, *yogīs* who behold you, obtain omniscience. By your compassion, *yogīs* all become bearers of pity and tolerance, being ones of **unequalled** (*atula*)⁴ **bliss** (*sukha*) and happiness,⁵ having obtained highest knowledge, being called great persons,⁶ having obtained liberation, **O you who are affectionate to devotees** (*bhaktivatsala*). Whoever will worship you: to such devotees, you always show pity, nourish and cherish them, and you are the one who protects them.

¹ No Chinese parallel.

² I.e., the qualities of the Buddha, rather than the teachings (Dharma) of the Buddha. The *Yogācārabhūmi Śāstra* gives 140 uncommon Buddha-dharmas (T30.1579.566c), *catvāriṃśaduttaram āveṇikaṃ buddhadharmaśatam* (A. Charles Muller, ed., *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, <http://buddhism-dict.net/ddb>, 31 August 2025, s.v. ‘百四十不共佛法’), but more common is the enumeration of eighteen uncommon Buddha-dharmas, *aṣṭādaśāveṇikabuddhadharmāḥ* (see Lamotte's treatment in *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse*, 1625–1628).

³ B 57₈ || ○ ||

⁴ The negated *a-tula* being represented in Newar by *tulya madayā*.

⁵ Or, ‘enjoyment’.

⁶ It could be that Niṣṭhānanda is interpreting *māhātmya* as equivalent to *mahāpuruṣa*.

¹(57₉)

|| || sakṛd apy āśaye śuddhe
yas tvām vidhivad īkṣate ||
tenāpi niyataṁ siddhiḥ
prāpyate 'moghadarśane || 5 ||

[|| || bhāṣā || ||]

he prajñāpāramitā chalapolayāta bhaktajana-
pisaṁ chako mātra cittaśuddha yānā rāgā
dveṣa māyā moha dakva totā vidhipurvaka
bhāvanānaṁ sahita yānānaṁ sahita yānā
chalapolayāta darśana yāi || thumha (58)
bhaktayāta avasya siddhi phala lāi|| gathya
dhālasā chalapola amoghadarśana || chal-
apolayāta darśana yānāgu gabalyaṁ niṣphala
jui makhu darśana yānā mātranaṁ
mokṣaphala lāi || [5] ||³

**One who sees you in the proper way,
even once, with a purified [mental]
basis,
Unfailing gains attainment in that un-
failing beholding.² (5)**

[Newar]

O Prajñāpāramitā! Those who are devoted to
you, having **purified** (*śuddha*) the mind only
once, entirely abandoning passion, hatred, il-
lusion, and delusion, and having joined in
the performance of meditation **in the proper
way**, will behold you. Such a devotee will
certainly obtain the fruit of **attainment** (*siddhi*)
because you are the one of **unfailing be-
holding** (*amoghadarśana*). When some-one
beholds you, they will never be fruitless;
having beheld you, they will immediately
obtain the fruit of liberation. (5)

¹ The following verse and commentary are absent in A.

² Hahn reads *amoghadarśane* in the vocative, as 'O Du, deren Anblick glückbringend ist!' 'O you, whose sight brings happiness' ('Zwei Texte', 64). It is hard to see that reading as working, but in any case, my translation here appears to be consistent with the interpretation of Niṣṭhānanda Vajrācārya, because 'When someone beholds you, they will not be fruitless.'

³ B 58₆ || ° ||

[9](587)

|| || sarveṣāṃ api vīraṇāṃ
parārthaniratātmanāṃ ||
poṣikā janayitrī ca
mātā tvam asi vatsalā || 6 ||

|| || bhāṣā || ||

**For any and all heroes who are concerned
with the welfare of others,
You are the nourisher, genetrix, and af-
fectionate mother. (6)**

Newar

he prajñāpāramitā gumhasyaṃ thavagu cit-
tam opini kāraṇe arpaṇa yāi || arthāt para
upakāra yāyaguli citta tayā thavagu manasā
vācā karmaṇānaṃ¹ para upakāra yāye dhakā
sarīra arpaṇa yāi || thvayāta vīra dhāi
thathimpim vīrapurūṣapinināṃ adhikajanānī
mām yānaṃ mām juyābijyākamha chalapola
(59) athavā sadākālaṃ śvartha totā kevala
para upakāra yāyeguli citta tayā
upakārayāmha chalapolayā putra thvayāta
chalapolaṃ utpatti yānā pālana poṣaṇā yānā
thva yātaṃtu chalapolaṃ darśana biyā
uddhāra yānā bijyāta thathya māmam
kāyamacāyāta pālana poṣaṇa yānā rakṣā yāi
va themtha va bhaktayāta pālana poṣaṇā yānā
bijyākamha chalapola || 6 ||

O Prajñāpāramitā! One who dedicates their
mind to others, meaning one who intends to
help others, will sacrifice oneself to help oth-
ers with one's own body, speech, and actions.
This is called a 'hero' (*vīra*); for such heroic
people, being mothers for other people, you
become the mother. Stated otherwise, having
abandoned self-interest for all time, one who
is a helper, having thought only of helping
others, is your son; and having given birth to
them, and having protected and nourished
them, you bestow beholding and deign to
save them. Just as a mother protects, **nour-
ishes** (*poṣaṇa*),² and guards her son, you are
the one who deigns to protect and nourish
such a devotee. (6)

¹ A 9₆ karmajānaṃ.

² The Newar *poṣaṇa* being used for the Sanskrit *poṣikā*.

[10](59₈)

|| || yad buddhā lokaguravaḥ
putrās tava kṛpālavaḥ ||
tena tvam api kalyāṇi
sarvasattvapitāmāhī || 7 ||

|| || bhāṣā || ||

he prajñāpāramitā thva saṃsāre gulita
prāṇipim dayā cona thvapim sakalayataṃ
hita sukha yāya dhakā lokapimta dakva
jñānaguṇa senekane yānā guru juyā bijyānā
cōpim buddha bhagavānapim dakva chal-
apolayā putra || cha(60)lapolaṃ sadākālaṃ
jagatyāta kalyāṇa yānā bijyāta chalapola sa-
kalalokayā pitāmāhī ||³ ajimāju juyā bijyāk-
amha arthāt chalapola sakalayā guru chal-
apolayā guru saṃsāre suṃ madu sa-
kalalokayā āsrā chalapolayāke chalapolayā
suyākyam āsrā madu || 7 ||

Since the *buddhas*, who are the parents
and teachers¹ of the world, are your
compassionate sons,
You, O beneficial one,² are the paternal
grandmother of all beings. (7)

Newar

O Prajñāpāramitā! Being merciful to how-
ever many living beings there are in this
world in order to please and benefit them all,
the *buddha bhagavāns*, deigning to become
parents and teachers (*guru*), instructing all
beings⁴ in the qualities of knowledge, are all
your sons. You, having deigned always to
benefit the world, are the **paternal grand-
mother** (*pitāmāhī*) of all beings. This means
you deigned to become their *ajimāju*.⁵ You
are everyone's teacher. You have no teacher
in the world. You are everyone's support. No
one is your support. (7)

¹ As Hahn rightly points out ('Zwei Texte', 66), *guravaḥ* has the implication of both 'Lehrer und Eltern', 'parents and teachers', which does not have an equivalent one-word translation in either German or English. The expanded translation is necessary in order for the paternal grandmother metaphor to make sense.

² More typically, *kalyāṇa* could be translated as 'wholesome' or 'excellent'. For consistency with the use in the Newar commentary, it is here translated as 'beneficial'.

³ A 10₉ ... sakalalokayā || pitāmāhī || ...

⁴ Typically, *lokapi-* would refer to men or humans generally, in the sense of 'folk', but for consistency with *prāṇipi-* above, it is translated here as 'beings'.

⁵ Paternal grandmother.

[11](60₇)

|| sarvapāramitābhis tvam
nirmalābhir anindite ||
candralekheva tārābhir
anuyātāsi sarvadā || 8 ||

|| bhāṣā ||

he anindite || nimdādoṣa chuṃ madayā sar-
vathā prasamsā yāye jogya juyā bijyākamha
he mātā gathya candramāyā lyu lyu nakṣatra
gaṇapiṃ bijyānā śobhāyamāna juyā cona ba-
tothvam nirmala juyā coṃgu, ṣaṭ pāramitā
dakvam lyu lyu bayā śobhāyamāna juyā bi-
jyāna coṃmha chalapola (61) gana 2 bijyāta
ana ṣaṭpāramitānaṃ saṃjukta juyā cona ||
gu[li]seṃ chalapolayāta darśaṇa mayāta
vayāke nānāprakārayā guṇadayā coṃsāṃ
thvayāgu guṇayā śobhā madu || ¹|| ṣaṭ
pāramitā thakyadugu vastu parayāta biyagu
dāna śucine mayāyagu śīla lokapisam
nhayāgu aparā dhayāsānaṃ kṣamā yāyagu
kṣānti thamam yānāgu jyā siddha yāyagu
vīrya cittayāta viṣayayāke hataya yānā
dhyāna yāyagu dhyāna mokṣa vanigu jñāna
[|| 8 ||]

**O irreproachable one, you are always fol-
lowed by all the *pāramitās* devoid of
stain,**

**Just as the moon's rays are always fol-
lowed by the stars. (8)**

Newar

O irreproachable one (*anandite*)! Having
no fault of blame at all, it is suitable to praise
you in every way. O Mother! Just as the con-
stellations follow the moon, adorning it, in
that way, being stainless, the six *pāramitās*
all come and adorn you. Wherever you are,
that place is supplied with the six *pāramitās*.
Inasmuch as one does not behold you, even
though they may have many kinds of virtues,
they are not adorned by this splendour [of the
Prajñā-pāramitā]. The six *pāramitās* are sep-
arate things: giving is '*dāna*', restraint out of
purity is '*śīla*', being patient when people
perform what are called the seven crimes² is
'*kṣānti*', working to accomplish one's own
task is '*vīrya*', maintaining application of the
mind to an object is '*dhyāna*', and
knowledge is reached through liberation by
performing *dhyāna*. (8)

¹ The rest of this section is absent in B.

² *nhayāgu aparā*. These words could refer to the seven kinds of *āpatti*, or transgression, according to the *pratimokṣa* systems of various vinayas. While it is possible that Niṣṭhānanda was acquainted with the Theravāda, it is not likely that he would consider the 'seven crimes' the definitive object of the patience of Mahāyāna *kṣānti*, and so these words remain ambiguous. They could be the first seven of the ten ways of unwholesome action (*daśākuśalakarmapatha*), or *nhayāgu aparā* could be a typo for *nāyāgu aparā*, 'five crimes', for which there would be several candidates.

[12](61₅)

|| || vineyaṃ janam āsādyā
tatra tatra tathāgataiḥ ||
bahurūpā tvam evaika
nānānamabhir īḍyase || 9 ||¹

|| || bhāṣā || ||

he prajñāpāramitā gana 2 upadeśa biyagu
jogya juyā cōpi śiṣyapiṃ nāpalāta ana 2
thumita tathāgatapisam pātra vicāra yānā
nānā prakārayā nāmanam chalapolayāgu
stuti yāta || || arthāt tārā durgā kālī bhavānī
bhagavatī ādiṃ nānā prakārayā devatāpiṃ du
dhakā tathāgatapisam ājñā dayakā bijyata ||³
yadyapi thathya dhakā kalpanā yāsānam⁴
chalapolajā chamha he (62) kha khaasānam⁵
chalapola viśvarūpa chalapolayāgu rūpa⁶
aneka prakārayā du ||⁷ sunānam amta kāya
maphu ||⁸ aneka rūpe⁹ vyāpaka juyā bijyāna
gvom̐mha¹⁰ chalapola || 9 ||

**Having approached, in various places,
people who are to be instructed, the
tathāgatas
Praise you, who are indeed one with
many forms, with various names.² (9)**

Newar

O Prajñāpāramitā! Wherever you meet disciples who are fit to be instructed, there the *tathāgatas*, having considered what is appropriate, praised you to them with various kinds of names. This means that the *tathāgatas* speak about [Prajñāpāramitā] as various kinds of *devatās*, such as Tārā, Durgā, Kālī, Bhavānī, Bhagavatī and so forth. Speaking in this way, although you are indeed one, you are of manifold forms, and you perfectly have various different forms—no one can apprehend the limit. You are the one who pervades in various forms. (9)

¹ A 12₂ no verse number.

² Rendering the passive as active.

³ A 12₉ no *daṇḍa*.

⁴ A 12₁₀ kalapanā yāsānam.

⁵ I understand this as khāsānam, ‘clearly’ or ‘perfectly’.

⁶ A 12₁₁ ... svarūpa.

⁷ A 12₁₂ no *daṇḍa*.

⁸ A 12₁₂ no *daṇḍa*.

⁹ B 62₃ rupam.

¹⁰ B 62₄ ... bijyākamha ...

[13](62₅)

|| || prabhāṃ prāpyeva dīptāṃśor
avaśyāyodabindavaḥ ||
tvāṃ prāpya pralayaṃ yānti
doṣā vādāś ca vādināṃ || 10 ||

**Like dewdrops upon meeting the sun's
rays,
The mistakes and disputes of disputants,
having met you, certainly melt away.¹
(10)**

|| || bhāṣā || ||

Newar

he prajñāpāramitā gathya śrī² suryya udaye
juyā suryyayāgu rasmim khayā mātranam
bāmā chomā³ ādim tṛṇajātiyā cokāsa congū⁴
jalabimdu naṣṭa juyā madayā⁵ bani bato
thyaṃ chalapola lānā mātranam chal-
apolayāgu prabhāvam vāḍijanapimgu⁶ vāda-
vivāda doṣa ārthāta⁷ jhakarā takarā dakvam⁸
naṣṭa juyā bani⁹ athavā guthāyata¹⁰ lokapisam
chalapolayāgu darśana malāta uthāyata thu-
migu matī saṃśaya¹¹ aura¹² vādavivāda jha-
karā takarā yāyegu naṣṭa juyā bani makhu¹³
arthāt thvamisam niśraya¹⁴ jñāna lāya phai
makhu || 10 ||

O Prajñāpāramitā! Just as when the auspi-
cious sun rises, as soon as the sun's rays
touch the drops of water on the tips of
grasses—like paddy plants and young bam-
boo shoots—they disappear like the wind, so
as soon as debaters have obtained you, by
your power¹⁵ their **mistakes and disputes**
(*doṣā vādāś ca*)—meaning their quarrels and
disputations—all vanish. Put another way,
wherever people **do not** behold you, doubts
arise in their minds, and disputes, debates,
and disputations do not vanish, meaning they
cannot obtain determinate knowledge.¹⁶ (10)

¹ Literally, 'go unto dissolution'. *Certainly* is taken from *avaśyāya* in the first line.

² B 62₇ omits śrī.

³ B 62₉ chvamā.

⁴ B 62₁₀ congū.

⁵ A 13₆ omits madayā.

⁶ B 62₁₃ vāḍijanapini.

⁷ B 62₁₄ arthāt.

⁸ B 62₁₄ takarā yāyagu dakvam.

⁹ B 62₁₅ banī.

¹⁰ B 62₁₅ guthāyataka.

¹¹ B 63₁ śāmsaya.

¹² B 63₁ omits aura.

¹³ A 13₁₂ omits makhu.

¹⁴ The intended meaning here is probably *niścaya*, 'determinate', rather than *niśraya*, 'support' or 'refuge'.

¹⁵ Here, I think Niṣṭhānanda may be playing with the meanings and etymologies of *prabhā* ('light') and *prabhāva* ('power').

¹⁶ Or, 'the knowledge which is a refuge'.

[14](63₄)

|| || tvam eva trāsajanānī
bālānām bhīmadarśanā ||
āśvāsajanānī cāsi
viduṣām saumyadarśanā || 11 ||

|| || bhāṣā || ||

**You indeed, with terrifying appearance,
are fear-inspiring to fools;
And you, with gentle appearance, are
comfort-inspiring to the wise. (11)**

Newar

he prajñāpāramitā || bālakha || arthāt murkha-
janayāta¹ chalapolam bhayaṃkara muruti²
kyanā trāsa³ utpattiyānā bijyāta || athavā mur-
khajanapim chalapola khanā jñānaconi⁴ tha-
thimma murkhayāta⁵ chalapolam gyānāpu-
gu muruti kyanā trāsa biyā bijyāta ||⁶ hānam⁷
vidvānjanapimta chalapolam śāmtagu
muruti⁸ kyanā rāgadveṣādi dakvaṃ śāmta
yānā bijyākamha ||⁹ chalapolayāgu rasmi thu-
mita śīla¹⁰ juyā coni || athavā jñānijanapisam
chalapolayāta darśana yāya dhakā aneka-
prakāram jatnajukti¹¹ yāi murkhajanapim¹²
chalapola khanā jñānā¹³ coni || 11 ||

O Prajñāpāramitā! To the infantile,¹⁴ mean-
ing to foolish people, you displayed a fearful
image,¹⁵ giving rise to terror. Stated other-
wise, to the foolish who are such foolish peo-
ple that they would be afraid having seen
you, you display a terrifying image, deigning
to bestow terror. However, to wise people,
you display a peaceful image, being one who
deigns to pacify all passion, hatred, and so
forth. Your light will be cooling to them. On
the other hand, the fearful people who will
engage in many kinds of exerted stratagems
in order to behold you, those fools, having
seen you, will be afraid. (11)

¹ B 63₇₋₈ he prajñāpāramitā murśajanapimta (= murkhajanapimta). Skt *mūrkhā*.

² Skt *mūrti*.

³ Skt *trāsa*.

⁴ B 63₁₀ gyānāconi. Both readings are legitimate, but the *jñāna* here is not the Sanskrit 'knowledge' but the Newar *gyāna(pu)*, 'fear'.

⁵ B 63₁₁ mūrśayāta (= mūrkhayāta).

⁶ B 63₁₃ no *daṇḍa*.

⁷ B 63₁₃ hāhanam (probably an error).

⁸ B 63₁₄₋₁₅ śānta muruti.

⁹ B 63₁₅₋₆₄ rāgadveṣādiṃ śānta yānā bijyākamha chalapola || Essentially the same, but the translation would read 'you, being one who ...' or 'O you, being one who ...'.

¹⁰ B 64₂ śīla.

¹¹ From *jatanajukti*. Skt *yatanayukti*.

¹² A 14₁₃ murkhajana.

¹³ B 64₅ gyānā.

¹⁴ Niṣṭhānanda first gives bālakha as a gloss for the Skt *bālānām* set off between two pairs of *daṇḍas* in A, but it is omitted in B. It appears that in A, he wished to make this a gloss, whereas in B, it is simply presented with the synonym, and the sentence, as read according to B, can be understood as starting from 'To foolish people ...' in the translation.

¹⁵ The Newar transposes the abstract, albeit devotional, *darśanā* with the concrete and ritually relevant *muruti*. In their daily lives, Newar Buddhists encounter a variety of both fearful and peaceful images of *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*, and this translation serves to explain such a phenomena in a way that is directly relevant to the Dharma. Also, as the term is abstract and is not explicitly treated as the verbal *darśanā* by Niṣṭhānanda, it is not rendered as 'beholding' in the translation of the Sanskrit.

[15](64₆)

|| || yasya tvayy apy abhiṣvaṅgas
tvannāthasya na vidyate ||
tasyāmba katham anyatra
rāgadveṣau bhaviṣyataḥ || 12 ||

|| || bhāṣā || ||

**He who has you as his master, but does
not know affection for you—
How, O Mother, could he experience pas-
sion or hatred elsewhere? (12)**

Newar

he prajñāpāramitā chalapolayā nātha arthāt
tathāgata vasapolanam rāgadveṣayāta
tiraskāra yānā chalapolayāta nāpalāta ||¹ he
mātā thva² them chalapolayā kyanam rāga
dveṣa chuṃ madu ||³ he mātā thumha
tathāgataṃ saṃsāre aneka prakārayā cījabīja⁴
dayācoṃsānam chu vastukīsaṃ rāgadveṣa⁵
mayā ||⁶ arthāt chalapolayāta nāpalānā darśa-
nayāka⁷ gu(67⁸)liṃ kṛtārtha juyā bijyāta || he
mātā tathāgatayākya va chalapolayākya rāga
dveṣa dhayāgu gabalyam daī makhu sakala
vastukesam rāga dveṣa madayā nivṛtti juyā
vana⁹ || 12¹⁰ ||

O Prajñāpāramitā! **He who has you as his master**¹¹ means the Tathāgata: he disdained **passion and hatred** (*rāgadveṣa*) and met you. O Mother! In this way, with you, there is nothing like passion or hatred. O Mother! Even though there are many kinds of things in the world, this Tathāgata did not have passion or hatred towards any of them. This means that because he met and beheld you, he became satisfied. O Mother! There is never any such thing as passion and hatred in the Tathāgata or in you, and [through you] all passion and hatred for things comes to be abandoned. (12)

¹ B 64₁₁ no *daṇḍa*.

² B 64₁₁ vato.

³ B 64₁₂ no *daṇḍa*.

⁴ Nep. cījbīj.

⁵ B 64₁₄ rāga.

⁶ A 15₉ no *daṇḍa*.

⁷ A 15₁₀ darśanayā.

⁸ The page numbers in B jump here, but the text continues.

⁹ B 65₃₋₄ ... vastu kesam nivṛtti juyā madā vani.

¹⁰ A 15₁₃ 15 (an error).

¹¹ Taken at face value, *chalapolayā nātha* would mean ‘your master’, but that would not make sense in this context.

[16](674)

|| || nāgacchasi kutaścīt tvam
na ca kvacana gacchasi ||
sthāneṣv api ca sarveṣu
vidvadbhir nopalabhyase || 13 ||

|| || bhāṣā || ||

**You neither come from anywhere nor do
you go anywhere,
And you are also not apprehended by the
wise in any place. (13)**

Newar

he prajñāpāramitā jogijanapisam chal-
apolayāta¹ dhyāna yānā dhyānaṃ bicāra yā-
nā sobale thumisaṃ pattā kāya maphu ||²
chalapola gananaṃ³ bijyāmhanaṃ makhu ||⁴
hānaṃ ganaṃ bijyāimhaṃ makhu sakala
sthāne chalapola vyāptamāna juyā⁵ cona ||⁶
thugu kham⁷ vidvān janapisamnam masyu ||⁸
arthāt jogijanapisam chalapola gana bi-
jyānācona dhakā dhyānaṃ bicāra⁹ yānā so-
bale chalapolayāta ganaṃ khamkya maphu ||
nirvikalpasamādhi yānā(68)copim jogijana-
pisam bicāra¹⁰ yānā sokabelasa chalapola sar-
vatesaṃ vyāpaka juyācomgu khana¹¹ || 13 ||

O Prajñāpāramitā! When the *yogīs* meditate or think of you in *dhyāna*, they cannot catch a trace of you. **You neither come from anywhere nor do you go anywhere**; you are pervading everywhere. Even the wise and learned do not know this. This means that when *yogīs* meditate on where you are, they cannot see you anywhere. When *yogīs* are practising *samādhi* without discrimination, they see that you pervade everywhere. (13)

¹ A 16₄ omits chalapolayāta.

² A 16₅ no *daṇḍa*.

³ B 65₉ ganaṃ.

⁴ A 16₆ no *daṇḍa*.

⁵ B 65₁₁ ...sthane vyāpta juyā ...

⁶ A 16₇ no *daṇḍa*.

⁷ B 65₁₁ thathya dhakā ...

⁸ A 16₈ no *daṇḍa*.

⁹ A 16₉ bicā.

¹⁰ A 16₁₁ bicālayā.

¹¹ A 16₁₂ vyāpaka khana.

[17](68₃)

|| ye tvām evaṃ na paśyanti
prapadyante ca bhāvataḥ ||
prapadya ca vimucyante
tad idaṃ mahad adbhutam || 14 ||

|| bhāṣā ||

he prajñāpāramitā sunāṃ chalapolayāke
saṃkalpavikalpa mayāsyā² premapurvakan-
aṃ chalapolayāta darśana yānā mātranam
mukta juyā vanaṃ thva chagu varā āścāryya
|| athavā jogījanapisam chalapolayāke
saṃkalpavikalpa mayāsyā kevala premapur-
vaka yānā chalapolayāta darśana yānā
mātranam mukta juyā vana thva chagu varā
āścāryya || gumhasyanam chalapolayāta
darśana yāya maphu ||³ darśana yāya ma-
phusam⁴ mukta juyā vana thvanam⁵ varā
a(69)tbhūta āścāryya⁶ || 14 ||

**Those who do not see you thus, but resort
to you,¹
Having resorted to you, are liberated—
this is a great wonder. (14)**

Newar

O Prajñāpāramitā! That someone is liberated,
without having discriminated you, having
merely beheld you with devotion, is a great
miracle. Also, that *yogīs* attain liberation
without having discriminated you, having
just been devoted and having merely beheld
you, is [also] a great miracle. That one who
cannot behold you still attains liberation even
though they cannot behold you, is also a great
wonder (*adbhuta*) and miracle.⁷ (14)

¹ I understand this *bhāva* as the respectful second person pronoun. Hahn, however, understands it as ‘being’ or ‘essence’ (‘Wesen’): ‘Dich (aber trotzdem) vom Wesen her erreichen ...’, ‘[But still] reach you by being/essence ...’ (‘Zwei Texte’, 68).

² A 17₅ ... kiṃ tu gathya dhālasā ... ‘But why?’

³ A 17₁₁ no *daṇḍa*.

⁴ A 17₁₂ sānam.

⁵ A 17_{13–14} thva chagu.

⁶ A 17₁₄ āścāryyā.

⁷ On the difficulties of interpreting this commentarial translation, see the introduction.

[18](69₁)

|| || tvām eva badhyate paśyann
apaśyann api badhyate ||
tvām eva mucyate paśyann
apaśyann api mucyate || 15 ||

|| || bhāṣā || ||

he prajñāpāramitā sunām chalapolayāta
darśana yāi¹ darśana yānā chalapolayāke rāg-
adveṣatāla dhālasā thumha jogī sadākālaṃ
bandhana² conī || || hānaṃ gumhasyaṃ chal-
apolayāta darśana mayāta thumha
manuṣyajā³ sadākālevaṃ⁴ dhane cvani jula ||
|| hānaṃ gumha 2 jogījanapisam chal-
apolayāta darśana yānā mokṣapada⁵ lānā va-
na ||⁶ tara chu dhālasā vināṃ chalapolayāta
darśana mayāsyē mokṣaphala lāi makhu || ||
gumhasyaṃ chalapolayāta darśana yānā
rāgadveṣa matalasā thumha jogīyākenam⁷
mokṣa(70)vanimha⁸ jui || 15 ||

**One who sees you is bound, and one who
does not see you is also bound;
One who sees you is liberated, and one
who does not see you is also liberated.
(15)**

Newar

O Prajñāpāramitā! Whoever will behold you,
and having beheld you, speaks with greed
and hatred towards you, that *yogī* will be
bound forever. However, whoever does not
behold you, will always receive a human
birth. However, some *yogīs*, having beheld
you, attain liberation. But in any case, with-
out beholding you, one will not attain libera-
tion. Whoever, having beheld you without
harbouring greed and hatred: it is just that
yogī who will attain liberation. (15)

¹ A 18₄ darśana yāta ...

² A 18₆ bandhane.

³ A 18₇ manuṣya.

⁴ A 18₇₋₈ kālaṃvaṃ.

⁵ A 18₉ mokṣa.

⁶ B 69₁₁ no *daṇḍa*.

⁷ A 18₁₂ jogi śīghra ...

⁸ A 18₁₂₋₁₃ mokṣa gāmī jui.

[19](70₁)

|| || aho vismayanīyāsi
gambhīrāsi yaśasvinī¹ ||
sudurbodhāsi māyeva²
dṛśyase na ca dṛśyase || 16 ||

|| || bhāṣā || ||

**O you are astonishing, you are profound
and famous!**
**You are hard to realise, like an illusion:
you are seen and yet not seen. (16)**

Newar

aho āścāryya chalapolam atyanta vismaya
padārtha utpatti yānā bijyāta chalapolayāgu³
gati lumamkāṃ lumamkya maphu ||⁴ parama
aciṃtya vicāra⁵ yānā svayām⁶ thathe coṃ
athya cvaṃ dhakā sunānam pattākāya maphu
kevala nirvikalpa samādhiṃ jakasi yakyagu
upāya du chalapolayāgu guṇa loke
prakhyāta⁷ juyā cvona chalapolayāta bo-
dhayāyata kaṭhinam jaka bodha jui māyā
svarūpa khane du ||⁸ hānam chakhyam⁹ svay-
abale dhalasā māyāthyanaṃ¹⁰ (71) makhu ar-
thāt chagu kāle chagū sthāne jogijanapisam
jaka chalapolayāta¹¹ darśana yāyagu sāmār-
tha dai ||¹² murkhajanapisam¹³ chalapolayāta
darśana yāyagu sāmārtha dai makhu || 16 ||

O it is miraculous! You have deigned to arise
in a most **astonishing** (*vismaya*) form, and I
cannot remember your way with memory.
No one can find out if you are ‘this way’ or
‘that way’ by searching for you after thinking
on supreme thoughtlessness, but only by
means of the discriminationless *samādhi*;
your virtue is pre-eminent in the world; your
realisation (*bodha*) will only be realised
with determination and will be seen to be like
an **illusion** (*māyā*). However, on the other
hand, you are not like an illusion. That is,
only *yogīs* are able to behold you at a partic-
ular time and place. Fools are not able to be-
hold you. (16)

¹ Acc. to A 19₁ B 70₂. Hahn has yaśasvini (‘Zwei Texte’, 70).

² A 19₂ B 70₃ māyaiva (also in Dutt, *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*).

³ A 19₅ chalapolayā.

⁴ B 70₆ no *daṇḍa*.

⁵ A 19₆ vicā.

⁶ A 19₆ śvayām.

⁷ B 70₁₀₋₁₁ guṇna lokasa prakhyāṃta.

⁸ B 70₁₃ no *daṇḍa*.

⁹ A 19₁₁ chaṃkhyam.

¹⁰ A 19₁₁ māyāthyanaṃ.

¹¹ B 71₂₋₃ chalapola polayāta.

¹² A 19₁₃ no *daṇḍa*.

¹³ A 19₁₃ murkhajanaṃ.

[20](71₅)

|| || buddhaiḥ pratyekabuddhaiś ca
śrāvakaiś ca niṣevitā ||
mārgas tvam ekā mokṣasya
nasty anya iti niścayaḥ || 17 ||

|| || bhāṣā || ||

saṃsāre buddha || pratyekabuddha || śrāvaka
||¹ svatā prakārayā jogi du thumisaṃ chal-
apolayāgu sevā yānā cvana mokṣayāgu
mārga chalapola chamha jaka du mepiṃ suṃ
madu dhakā niścaya yānā² bijyāta vināṃ
chalapolayāta darśana mayāseṃ kadācit
mokṣa vani makhu dhakā pratijñā yānā bi-
jyāta || || jiṃ thugu jyā yāya (72) dhakā
pratijñā yānā jogī juyā jogam pure yānā sar-
vajñatva phala lānā asaṃkhya lokayāta jogī³
yānā lyulyu tayā jumhayāta buddha dhāi || ||
buddha bhūmīsa gamana yāyagu ichāyāi
ichāyāsānaṃ vane maphayā bicesaṃtuṃ
jogī⁴ jumhayāta⁵ pratyekabuddha dhakā dhāi ||
|| mepiṃ nigu chuṃ bhalasā madu dhakā
thathe⁶ thamanam śānta juyā lokahita yānā
śrāvaka dhāi⁷ ||⁸ thva śvatā prakārayā jogiṃ
mokṣapada lānā vana || 17 ||

**Worshipped by the *buddhas*, *pratyek-*
abuddhas, and *śrāvakas*,
You are the one path to liberation; there
is no other, this is certain. (17)**

Newar

In the world, there are three kinds of *yogīs*: *buddha*, *pratyekabuddha*, and *śrāvaka*. They worship you, having certitude that you are the only **path to liberation**. They have declared that there will never be liberation without beholding you. One who becomes a *yogī*, having declared, 'I shall engage in this practice', and who, having fulfilled their *yoga*, has obtained the fruit of omniscience, bringing countless people into practising *yoga*, is called a '*buddha*'. The *yogī* who wishes to reach the stage of a *buddha*, but who thinks they are not capable of attaining that aspiration, is called a '*pratyekabuddha*'.⁹ One who does not have the confidence of the other two but has attained tranquillity for themselves and works for the benefit of the world is called a '*śrāvaka*'. These three kinds of *yogīs* attain liberation. (17)

¹ B 71₉ no *daṇḍa*.

² B 71₁₂ yā.

³ A 20₁₁ yogi.

⁴ A 20₁₃ yogi.

⁵ B 72₆ jumhayāta.

⁶ B 72₈ thavathe; A 20₁₅ thathya.

⁷ B 72₉₋₁₀ lokahitayākamha sravaka dhāyī; A 20₁₅ omits verb (dhāi or dhāyī).

⁸ Final sentence omitted in B.

⁹ This is not the standard definition of *pratyekabuddha*, which is rather, as the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (3.94) puts it, *vinopadeśenātmānam ekam pratibudhā iti pratyekabuddhāḥ || te hy ekam ātmānam damayanti nānyān ||* 'Pratyekabuddhas are those who awaken by themselves without instruction, for they tame [teach] only themselves, not others.' A full *buddha*, in contrast, teaches others.

[21](72₁₀)

|| || vyavahāraṃ puraskṛtya
prajñāptiyartham śārīrīṇām ||
kṛpayā lokanāthais tvam
ucyase ca na cocyase || 18 ||

|| || bhāṣā || ||

he prajñāpāramitā chalapolayāgu carcā
jogījanapisam nirvikalpa samādhi joga
yānānam anta kāya maphu ||¹ athayā niṃtiṃ
lo(73)kavyavahāra² || arthāt³ lokācārayāgu
kham⁴ nhyone tayā śārīradhāraṇā yānā
cvampim prāñijanapiṃta cetanā dayakāyāta⁵
dayākṛpā tayā lokayā nātha juyā compim
jogījanapisam⁶ athavā⁷ buddha pratyekabu-
ddha śrāvaka janapisam chalapolayāgu carcā
thathe com athe com dhakā śiṣyapiṃta
guṇavarṇa⁸ yānā bijyāta || gulisenam⁹ prakā-
śa mayā || 18¹⁰ ||

**Having taken into account convention,
and to give beings a designation,
The lords of the world, in their pity,
speak of you and yet speak not of you.
(18)**

Newar

O Prajñāpāramitā! Your discourse cannot be reckoned by *yogīs* through the *yoga* practice of the discriminationless *samādhi*, because it is a worldly **convention**. This means that with consideration for living things who are **bearing a body** (*śārīrin*), putting matters of worldly conduct first, having compassionate **pity** (*kṛpa*), being **lords of the world**, *yogīs*—*buddhas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, or *śrāvakas*—deign to characterise you for disciples, saying you are ‘like this’ or ‘like that’. Even so, they have not fully revealed you. (18)

¹ A 21₅ no *daṇḍa*.

² B 72₁₅–73₁ lolokavyavahāra.

³ B 72₁₅ *daṇḍa* placement: arthāt ||.

⁴ B 73₂ *anusvāra* (ṃ) instead of *candrabindu*.

⁵ A 21₈ dayakeyāta.

⁶ A 21₉ *daṇḍa* inserted.

⁷ A 21₉ arthāt.

⁸ A 21₁₁ guṇavarṇā; B 73₈ guṇavarṇana.

⁹ B 73₈₋₉ gulisyanam.

¹⁰ B 73₉ has circle in place of number.

[22](739)

॥ ॥ śaktaḥ kas tvām iha stotum
nirnimittāṃ nirañjanām ॥
sarvavāgviṣayātītāṃ
yā tvam kvacid anīśritā ॥ 19 ॥

॥ ॥ bhāṣā ॥ ॥

**Who here is able to praise you, who are
signless and stainless,
Beyond the range of all speech—you who
are not dependent on anything? (19)**

Newar

he mātā chalapolayāgu stuti yāyephumha su
du arthāt sum madu ॥¹ chalapola nirnimitta ॥²
nimitta chuṃ madu ॥³ jagatayā kāraṇe juyā
bijyākamha⁴ ॥⁵ nirañjana ॥⁶ chala(74)po-
layāgu ākāra chuṃ khane madu ॥⁷ arthāt
sthuladeha makhu sūkṣmadeha juyā bi-
jyākamha⁸ chalapolayāta jogījanapisam dhy-
āna cakṣunaṃ svadabale⁹ jaka chalapolayāta
khani natara khani makhu¹⁰ vacanayākeṃ
agocara śabdaguṇayākyanaṃ¹¹ pāre bijyāna
coṃmha ॥¹² he mātā chalapola ganaṃ pyāhā
bijyāgunaṃ makham ॥¹³ arthāt sārājagatayā
āśraya juyā coṃmha chalapolayāke
sārājagata āśrita juyā cvanaṃ ॥ 19¹⁴ ॥

O Mother! **Who is able to praise you?** The answer is: no one. You are **signless**: without any cause,¹⁵ because you are the cause of the world. You are **stainless**, as your form is invisible. This means that you do not have a gross body; you have a subtle body. *Yogīs* can see you only with the eyes of three years of *dhyāna*, and not otherwise. You are beyond the reach of speech and the qualities of sound. O Mother! You are not dependent on anything. That is to say, you are the support for the entire world; the whole world is dependent on you. (19)

¹ B 73₁₃ no *daṇḍa*.

² B 73₁₄ no *daṇḍa*.

³ B 73₁₄ no *daṇḍa*; A 22₆ athavā ॥.

⁴ A 22₆ coṃmha.

⁵ B 73₁₅ no *daṇḍa*.

⁶ B 74₁₅ athavā.

⁷ A 22₇ no *daṇḍa*.

⁸ A 22₈ bijyākamha thathimha.

⁹ A 22₉ śvadabale.

¹⁰ A 22₁₀ manu.

¹¹ B 74₈ kyam = kenam.

¹² A 22₁₁ no *daṇḍa*.

¹³ B 74₈ no *daṇḍa*.

¹⁴ B 74₁₁ number omitted.

¹⁵ The latter meaning of *nimitta* is how it is understood in Newar ('cause'), whereas the former ('sign') is Buddhist Sanskrit (this distinction may not have been clear to Niṣṭhānanda).

[23](74₁₁)

|| || saty evaṃ api saṃvṛtyā
vākpathair vayam īdrśaiḥ ||
tvām astutyām api satīm
tuṣṭūṣantaḥ sunīrvṛtāḥ || 20 ||

|| || bhāṣā || ||

**Even though your ladyship is hidden, by
praising you thus
We are satisfied and well-emancipated—
although your ladyship is not praisa-
ble. (20)**

Newar

api ¹ he prajñāpāramitā (75) chalapolayāgu
tuti yāyegu jigu sāmārtha madu yadyapi ath-
yanaṃ vacanayāgu dvāraṃ ² citta śuddha
yānā bāraṃbāra tuti yāyagu icchā yānā cvanā
|| || ³ chuyā nīmti ⁴ dhālasā jiṃ mokṣapada
lāya dhakā ⁵ icchā yānā thugu tuti ⁶ yānā ||
chalapolayāgu tuti yāyephuma su du
brahmā viṣṇu mahādevayā ⁷ sāmārtha madu
mepini chu sāmārtha dai || athyanaṃ chal-
apolayāta thugu tuti bvanā stotra yānā
mātranam lokapiṃta mokṣapada loka ⁸ dhakā
icchā yānā jiṃ ⁹ thugu ¹⁰ tuti ¹¹ yānā || ¹² sunām
thugu tuti ¹³ yāi umha manuṣya yākanam nir-
vāṇapada lāimha juīmā ¹⁴ || 20 ||

Moreover, O Prajñāpāramitā, while it is not
in my power to praise you, still, I wish to pu-
rify my mind by repeatedly praising you
through these words. Why? Because I wished
to attain liberation, so I am making this
praise. Who can praise you? It is not within
the power of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, or Mahādeva.
So, what power do others have? Even so, I
wish for people to attain the state of libera-
tion just by reciting this praise of you; so I
have made this praise. Whoever will perform
this praise, that human will quickly attain *nir-
vāṇa*. (20)

¹ B 74₁₄ no *daṇḍa*.

² A 23₅₋₆ dvāraṇam.

³ B 75₄ omits cvanā and the *daṇḍas*.

⁴ A 23₇ chu yārṇitīm; B 75₄ chuyā nirti.

⁵ A 23₈ dhayāgu.

⁶ B 75₆ tvatra.

⁷ B 75₇₋₈ ... brahmā ādi devalokapininam.

⁸ B 75₁₁ lo. I suspect this is actually supposed to be a verb, perhaps lāyki ('cause to attain ...'). I have translated this passage under this assumption, otherwise it will be hard to make sense of it.

⁹ B 75₁₂ omits jiṃ.

¹⁰ A 23₁₂ thu.

¹¹ B 75₁₂ tota.

¹² B 75₁₂ no *daṇḍa*.

¹³ B 75₁₂ tota.

¹⁴ B 75₁₄ juyīmā.

[24](75₁₄)

|| || prajñāpāramitāṃ stutvā
yan mayopacitaṃ śubham ||
tenāstv āśu (76) jagat kṛtsnam
prajñāpāraparāyaṇam || 21 ||

|| || bhāṣā || ||

śrī prajñāpāramitā devīyāgu stotra¹ yānāgu
puṇyayāgu phala chuṃ bhaṭicā jita lāta²
thugu puṇyayā prabhāva jigu matī icchā juki³
sārāpṛthivīsa⁴ cvanā comṇim⁵ prāṇijanapim⁶
sakasyānaṃ⁷ yākanam śrī prajñāpāramitā-
devī darśana yānā sarvajñatva phala lānā
mokṣa vanipim juimā || 21⁸ ||

iti śrī prajñāpāramitā ekaviṃśatistotraṃ⁹
samāptaṃ ||

|| ye dharmā hetuprabhāvā
hetus teṣāṃ tathāgataḥ ||¹⁰
hy avadat teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha
evaṃ vādī mahāśramaṇaḥ ||¹¹

¹²|| śrī prajñāpāramitā devī namaḥ ||

**Through whatever benefit I have accu-
mulated by praising the
Prajñāpāramitā,
May the whole world quickly make
Prajñā its highest resort. (21)**

Newar

Whatever little merit I have accumulated
from praising Śrī Prajñāpāramitā Devī, I
wish that through the power of this merit, all
living beings on the entire earth may quickly
behold Śrī Prajñāpāramitā Devī, obtain the
fruit of omniscience, and attain liberation.
(21)

End of the Praise of Prajñāpāramitā in
Twenty-One Verses.

**Those *dharmas* that arise from causes, the
Tathāgata has declared their cause
And that which is their cessation—thus
speaks the Great Śramaṇa.**

Homage to Śrī Prajñāpāramitā Devī!

¹ A 24₄ tuti.

² A 24₅ alāta.

³ B 76₄₋₅ juṇki.

⁴ A 24₆ sārāpṛthivī.

⁵ A 24₆ com.

⁶ A 24₇ prāṇipim.

⁷ B 76₆ ekasnānaṃ.

⁸ B 76₈ has circle in place of number.

⁹ B 76₁₀ °stvatraṃ.

¹⁰ B 76₁₁ no *daṇḍa*.

¹¹ B 76₁₂ no *daṇḍa*.

¹² Final homage absent in A.

(77)¹

śrī prajñāpāramitā pustakapūjā yānā
saṃkalpa yāyagu vakya² ye kecid daśāṣu di-
kṣu aprameyeṣu³ asaṃkhyeṣu lokadhātuṣu
devā nāgā yakṣā gaṃdharvā asurā garūḍā⁴
kiṃnarā mahoragā manuṣyā amanuṣyās te
itaḥ pustakāt prajñāpāramitā⁵ paśyantu va-
ṃdantā⁶ namaskurvantu udgrhñantu⁷ dhā-
rayantu vācayantu⁸ paryyavāpnuvantu deśay-
antu upadiśantu uddiśantu svādhyāyantu⁹ pa-
rīkṣya vanditvā namaskṛtyodgrhya¹⁰ dhārayit-
vā vācayitvā paryyavāpya pravartya
deśayitvopadiśyodiśya¹¹ svādhyāyya punar
api¹² svabhavanāni gacchantu teṣā¹³ i(78)-
daṃ dharmadānam eva dattaṃ bhavantu || ||

Verse for the pledge when performing a
pustaka pūjā of the *Śrī Prajñāpāramitā*:
**May those *devas*, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *gandhar-
vas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*,
humans, and non-humans in the ten direc-
tions, in the innumerable and countless
world-systems, see the *Prajñāpāramitā*
from this book here. May they pay hom-
age to it, bow down to it, take it up, bear
it, recite it, master it, teach it, indicate it,
explain it, and study it. Having seen it,
paid homage to it, bowed down to it, taken
it up, borne it, recited it, mastered it,
taught it, indicated it, explained it, shown
it, and studied it, may they again go to
their own abodes—may this Dharma-gift
thus be given to them.**

visarjananam thukī he vana thugu saṃkalpa
vākya bonā sunāṃ pujābhāva yāi śvayāta
ananta punya lāi || || || ||

Here, [the *devas*] are dismissed. Whoever
performs a *pūjā* having read this pledge verse
will have unlimited merit.

¹ This section is a postface found in B but not in A.

² The following is a quote from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. Cf. Unrai Wogihara, ed., *Abhisama-
yālaṃkāra'ālokā Prajñāpāramitāvyākhyā* (Commentary on *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā*) by
Haribhadra, together with the Text Commented On, pt 1 (Tōyō Bunko, 1935), 257; cf. also Vaidya,
Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā.

³ B 77₃ aprameyeṣu.

⁴ B 77₅ garūḍā.

⁵ B 77₇ prajñāpāramitā.

⁶ B 77₇ vaṃdantāṃ.

⁷ B 77₇ udgrhñantu.

⁸ Not in Wogihara or Vaidya's editions.

⁹ B 77₁₀ svāyantu.

¹⁰ B 77₁₁ namaskṛtya udagrhya.

¹¹ B 77₁₃ deśayitvā upadiśya udadiśya.

¹² Wogihara and Vaidya's editions have eva.

¹³ B 77₁₄ teṣaṃ- (B effectively reads 'teṣaṃmidam').

[25]¹

|| pāṭha yānāguyā phala ||

The Fruits of Reciting

sunām thva saphu dayakā nhithaṃ dhāraṇa
 yāi pāṭha yāi parayāta upadeśa biī thvayāta
 akāla mṛtyu jui makhu saṃgrāme vaṃsānaṃ
 bepāre vaṃsānaṃ samudra pāra yāsānaṃ
 thvayāta gabalyaṃ bhaya daī makhu kro-
 dhalobhanaṃ daī makhu gabalya 2 krodha ut-
 patti juyā bosānaṃ jhaṭṭa smṛti dayā krodha
 śāṃta juyā vani || || gana thva sutra pāṭha yāi
 ana bhūta preta piśācapim dayā coṃsāṃ
 hrdaye juyā vani guli 2 thvayā ciṃta śuddha
 jula uli 2 devatāpisaṃ prīti taī || || devatāpim
 bijyāgu sīkyagu upāya || || akasmāt palapasā
 to thyaṃ² joti khani || athavā divyagandha
 śrīkhaṇḍa aguru ādim dhupayā bāsanā
 valadhālasā | thana suṃ devatāpim bijyāta
 dhakā sīki || || || ||

Whoever makes this into a book and chants it daily, recites it daily, and gives instruction in it to others, will not die an untimely death; when going into battle, when going into business, or when crossing the ocean, they will not be afraid; whenever anger arises, they will immediately remember reading it and their anger will be calmed. Where this *sūtra* is read, there ghosts, *pretas*, and *piśācas* will become kind of heart; the purer one's mind, the more the *devas* will be pleased. Methods for knowing that *devatās* have come: If a sudden, powerful light appears like a flash, or you smell a divine fragrance like *śrī khaṇḍa*, *aguru*, etc., then you will know that a *devatā* has arrived.³

¹ This section is a postface found in A but not in B.

² I.e., palpasā thva them.

³ I translate understanding the plural as an honorific singular, but this could also be understood as saying 'that *devatās* have arrived'.

Appendix: the Chinese Praise of the Prajñāpāramitā

As it preserves a rendition of these verses datable to c. 405 CE, the Chinese rendition, as it appears in fascicle 18 of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-Śāstra* (translated by Kumārajīva but traditionally attributed to Nāgārjuna), is also worth considering.¹ As discussed in our introduction, the earliest attribution to Rāhulabhadra appears to be by Jízàng.² While several translations exist, which have their respective merits,³ a translation that can align vocabulary where appropriate to a translation from Sanskrit, while annotating parallels, is desirable.⁴

Below, I present the Chinese text of the praise as it appears in the *Taishō* on the left, accompanied by an English translation on the right. To contextualise the praise, I will provide the passage that directly precedes it, which brings up the praise as a way to illustrate a passage in the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (as translated by Kumārajīva)—on which the śāstra is a commentary—regarding the term ‘the true nature of all *dharma*s’. The śāstra first explains that the true nature of all *dharma*s is that they are beyond grasping, indestructible, unchanging, and uncreated. While people may hold diverse views about all *dharma*s, the *bodhisattva* who teaches about them will neither affirm nor negate characteristics as belonging to them or not. By thus abandoning conceptuality regarding *dharma*s, one comes to realise how they are of the nature of *nirvāṇa*: fundamentally equal and neither arising nor ceasing.

Regarding the verses themselves, I have indicated in parentheses the verses in the extant Sanskrit to which they correspond. The first thing that one will notice is that while there are twenty verses (representing translations of four-*pāda śloka*s), they do not line up with our extant Sanskrit (i.e., we could call it a *Prajñāpāramitā-Viṃśati-Stotra*). The Chinese praise is missing verses four, five, eight, fourteen, and twenty-one; has expanded verse fifteen into two verses; and includes three additional verses not found in the Sanskrit. Taken at face value, these additional verses and variants appear credible; however, we should expect nothing less from Kumārajīva, the skilled artisan behind the creation of the final form of the śāstra as it appears in Chinese. One possibility for these divergences would be that we are looking at a witness earlier than the one that we now find in Sanskrit, which had been altered over time until it came to match what we see in Nepalese manuscripts. The second possibility, which, however, cannot be easily dismissed, would be that Kumārajīva employed his characteristic skill in presenting a praise that does not necessarily serve as a formal translation of a Sanskrit witness, but which expresses the qualities of the original by employing idioms that were, nonetheless, traditionally accepted.

¹ T25.1509.190b10–191a1.

² Trans. from T42.1824.168c2–7.

³ Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse*, 1060–1065; Chödrön, ‘Part 3—The Prajñāpāramitāstotra’; Smitheram, *Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise*, 9–15.

⁴ As Hahn’s edition and translation shows, the Tibetan aligns with the extant Sanskrit, such that it does not necessarily warrant its own appendix.

問曰：

云何是諸法實相？

答曰：

眾人各各說諸法實相，自以為實。此中實相者，不可破壞，常住不異，無能作者。如後品中佛語須菩提：

「若菩薩觀一切法，非常非無常，非苦非樂，非我非無我，非有非無等，亦不作是觀，是名菩薩行般若波羅蜜。」

是義，捨一切觀，滅一切言語，離諸心行，從本已來不生不滅，如涅槃相；一切諸法相亦如是，是名諸法實相。如〈讚般若波羅蜜偈〉說：

「般若波羅蜜，實法不顛倒，
念想觀已除，言語法亦滅。

無量眾罪除，清淨心常一，
如是尊妙人，則能見般若。

如虛空無染，無戲無文字；
若能如是觀，是即為見佛。

若如法觀佛，般若及涅槃，
是三則一相，其實無有異。

Question:

What is the ‘true nature of all *dharma*s’?⁵

Answer:

Everyone speaks of the true nature of all *dharma*s, each thinking their own explanation is true. In this case, the true nature of all *dharma*s is indestructible, permanent, unchanging, and without a creator. As the Buddha says to Subhūti in a later chapter:

‘If a *bodhisattva* observes all *dharma*s as neither permanent nor impermanent, neither suffering nor bliss, neither self nor not self, neither existent nor non-existent, and so forth, and also does not make such observations, then it is said that that *bodhisattva* practises the *Prajñāpāramitā*.’

This means that if one abandons all observations, extinguishes all speech, and separates from all mental activities, then from the beginning there is neither arising nor cessation, just like the nature of *nirvāṇa*; the nature of all *dharma*s is also like this. This is the nature of all *dharma*s. As is stated in the *Gāthā of Praise of the Prajñāpāramitā*:

‘The *Prajñāpāramitā*, the true Dharma free from error,
Which is removed from thought, perception, and observation, and in whom the *dharma*s of speech have also been extinguished, (= Ø)

Which is infinite and free from faults, a pure mind, always unified;
Thus [also] are those excellent people who can see you, O *Prajñā*. (=1)

Like space, unstained, free from falsehood, and free from letters;
If one can see thus, one sees the Buddha. (=2)

If one sees the Buddha, *Prajñā*, and *Nirvāṇa* according to the Dharma,
Then these three are of one aspect; they truly are not at all different. (=3)

⁵ The ‘true nature of all *dharma*s’ is the *sūtra* passage on which this part of the *Śāstra* is a commentary.

諸佛及菩薩， 能利益一切；
般若為之母， 能出生養育。

All *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* can benefit all
[beings];
Their mother is Prajñā, who can give birth to
and nourish them. (=6)

佛為眾生父， 般若能生佛，
是則為一切， 眾生之祖母。

The *buddhas* are the fathers of sentient be-
ings, and Prajñā can give rise to *buddhas*;
Therefore, she is the grandmother of all sen-
tient beings. (=7)

般若是一法， 佛說種種名，
隨諸眾生力， 為之立異字。

Prajñā is the one Dharma, [for which] the
Buddha speaks various names;
In accordance with the powers of sentient be-
ings, different words are established for it.
(=9)

若人得般若， 議論心皆滅；
譬如日出時， 朝露一時失。

If someone attains Prajñā, thoughts of dispu-
tation are all extinguished,
Just as when the sun rises, dewdrops imme-
diately disappear. (=10)

般若之威德， 能動二種人：
無智者恐怖， 有智者歡喜。

The majesty of Prajñā can move two kinds of
people:
Fools are fearful, and the wise are joyful.
(=11)

若人得般若， 則為般若主；
般若中不著， 何況於餘法！

If someone attains Prajñā, then Prajñā is their
master:
They are not attached to Prajñā, let alone to
other *dharma*s. (=12)

般若無所來， 亦復無所去，
智者一切處， 求之不能得。

Prajñā neither comes from anywhere nor
does it go anywhere,
And it cannot be apprehended by the wise in
any place.⁶ (=13)

若不見般若， 是則為被縛；
若人見般若， 是亦名被縛。

If one does not see Prajñā, then one is bound;
If one does see Prajñā, then one is also bound.
(=15.1)

若人見般若， 是則得解脫；
若不見般若， 是亦得解脫。

If one sees Prajñā, then one is liberated;
If one does not see Prajñā, then one is also
liberated. (=15.2)

⁶ ‘Cannot be apprehended’ (不能得) here refers to cognitive inapprehensibility (Skt *anupalambha*, and the like). The corresponding Sanskrit verse (13) has *nopalabhyase*.

是事為希有， 甚深有大名；
譬如幻化物， 見而不可見。

This is a rare matter, exceedingly profound
and incredibly famous;
Just like an illusion, it is seen and yet cannot
be seen. (=16)

諸佛及菩薩， 聲聞辟支佛，
解脫涅槃道， 皆從般若得。

Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*, *śrāvakas* and
pratyekabuddhas,
The path to liberation and *nirvāṇa*—all these
are attained through *Prajñā*. (17)

言說為世俗， 憐愍一切故，
假名說諸法， 雖說而不說。

Verbal expression is for the sake of worldly
convention: because of kind compassion
for all,
Through designations, Dharma teachings are
spoken, yet that speaking is not speaking.
(18)

般若波羅蜜， 譬如大火焰，
四邊不可取， 無取亦不取。

The *Prajñāpāramitā* is just like a great flame
Which is ungraspable on all four sides:
there is neither grasping nor non-grasping.
(= Ø)

一切取已捨， 是名不可取；
不可取而取， 是即名為取。

All grasping being abandoned is what ‘un-
graspable’ means;
Grasping the ungraspable is what is known as
‘grasping’. (= Ø)

般若無壞相， 過一切言語，
適無所依止，⁷ 誰能讚其德？

Prajñā is without the characteristics of decay
and is beyond all language;
Not dependent on anything, who can praise
your virtues? (=19)

般若雖叵讚， 我今能得讚，
雖未脫死地， 則為已得出！

Although *Prajñā* is beyond praise, I can now
praise it;
Although I am not yet released from the stage
of mortality, it is as though I am already
emancipated!’ (=20)

⁷ A note in the *Taishō* edition indicates 屬 as a variant for the character 止 here. This would not change the English translation, but might imply a stronger degree of dependence, in the sense of ‘subjection’.

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