

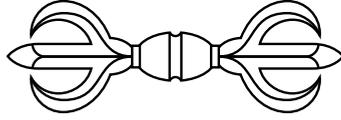
A commentary on
THE DIAMOND SŪTRA

Zen Master Engaku Taino
Zen Master Reiyo Ekai

How to realize Enlightenment Here & Now
through an active experience of Life



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E D I T O R E

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WHERE THE REAL DIAMOND COMES FROM

Foreword by Zen Master Leonardo Anfoli Reiyo

Practitioners commonly have kensho experiences, momentary glimpses of completeness, and from these, they go to a Master to ask for sincere advice. The typical question is: *“How I could replicate these experiences and keep it within myself forever?”*

The Diamond Sutra is all about this and is a treasure trove of methods and experiences, only if we succeed in understanding and using it. Otherwise we could just read it and have blissful and calm experiences with a good accumulation of merits, but we are not sure that we abide in the real, pristine state of enlightenment. If you start to practice and realize your meditation you can utilize it in every moment of your life. For this reason, the commentary may appear to be very simple but it goes on the spot and the next chapter - “Realizing a Path through the Diamond Sutra” – explains how to use the two different translations.

The chapter after contains effective techniques that can provide us with real experiences. For centuries, this Sutra has been considered a shortcut to understand what the Mind of the Buddha, the Enlightened Mind of all the Enlightened Ones is. I pay my respects to this ancient and blissful text, considered to be the first printed book of humankind made with woodblocks and I am happy to share this beauty with everyone who is a true seeker. A thinking man always tries to focus on finding answers to his main questions, figuring out all those pieces made from underlying meanings, significance and mental images. Rarely bare insights and direct perceptions are part of this quest, but being that this theme is - for all religions - the Core of all Themes, we should pay attention to the tools and the kind of attention that we commonly use and that, in this case,

might not work. Even from the monotheistic point of view, long before accepting any scriptures, dogmas or ethics, a follower should at least understand some of the ancient rites and prayers or what a priest says to him now. So, for this very reason, the Enlightened Mind – the mind that truly can understand eternity and therefore religion and words - is at the base of every philosophy, religion or point of view in the world, even if we call this Mind by other terms like Holy Ghost or the Uncreated Aspect of the Soul^[1], Taichi or Wuwei, Buddhi and Mukti or Kaivalya, Ma'rifa or Mushahada, Sekhel Meir or collective unconscious.^[2]

The Diamond Sutra presents us with not just some mere answers about this difficult theme, but pretends to show us the simplest way to orient our attention and open our mind to a more vast and personal insight about this mystery. In other words, this Sutra with all his paradoxes permits and encourages us to understand the matter by ourselves, going more deeply inside or even beyond whatever has been written and stated before. I could use as an example a perfectly closed box that contains some kind of “supreme wisdom”. Somebody tries to understand the content in a deductive way looking at the sender, at the recipient, and at the quality of the wrap, et cetera. Buddha, in this sutra, takes out a drill and makes holes in the box and reminds you that you already have a light in your hand with which you could easily look inside the box through the holes, having deep insights about the real content. Of course, this is an example but sometimes we actually need to forget our tools and reach for some new insights, something more interesting than points of view, or certainties. Being that a supreme wisdom is recognized everywhere through the naked experience of our perception, no more drills or lights are needed after we find the intensity of this direct inquiry. For this

[1] A term used by the Christian mystic Meister Eckart.

[2] The agreements between C. G. Jung, K. Nishida and D. T. Suzuki about the Satori Enlightenment as a complete realization of the collective unconscious were made verbally but never recognized by the Swiss psychoanalyst.

reason, because of this personal discovery, this scripture could be useful for people of every religion. Since my youth, I have enjoyed the strength and the beauty that is inside all the religions and the philosophies of east and west, and then I found, in the Diamond and the Heart Sutras, the deepest shift in what-we-can-do-to-finally-understand. These sutras contain not a revelation but a return of the naked memory of being, something we can relate to as our religion says or permits us to say. Dr. Paul Harrison^[3] of Stanford University says that this sutra “*Deconstructs the normal categories of our experience*”, with which we can agree. This ancient text is full of paradoxes and every one of them brings a silent, extreme insight, an unexpected jump beyond plain logic, beyond all the reference categories, functioning as a skillful means to give the proper approach to the new information. In this way, the insight appears valuable, void and suspended in a state of unexpected bliss. Every time this emotional insight is stated, lost and found again, even with many repetitions. For example, an incredible amount of merits that come from reading and explaining the Sutra is emphasized, but from the point of view of the inevitable, inherent paradox contained in this text, the Sutra states that they are at the same time non-merits being that they are void; but for this reason we can, in some ways, call them “merits”, being made real by the same fact/experience of being void. The Diamond Sutra explains the void power of the blessing that emanates from the immediate merit/fact of understanding, reciting and teaching even four lines of the text. In this way, the Sutra emphasizes, for the next centuries, its real meaning and function, being not a mere exercise book of hyper-logic, but a real meditative practice, a sharing of active knowledge that changes the lives of people. The Diamond Sutra has always been regarded as a deep, meaningful emanation of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, and is often considered as a broader philosophical introduction to the short and punchy Heart Sutra, which is the most

[3] An interview with Dr. Harrison: Finding New Meaning in One of the World's Oldest Books <http://humanexperience.stanford.edu/diamondsutra>

marajiva is the most famous translator of Sanskrit into Chinese and lived between the fourth and fifth centuries. While imprisoned in China for several years due to a political change, he learned Chinese perfectly. Finally, Nirvana no longer was translated as Wuwei (non-action) and the void^[4] was no more translated as Wu (negation), but both the terms were translated more precisely by Kumarajiva. He understood the etymology of many simple and colloquial terms of the Chinese languages and their broader meaning. So these replaced those concepts already in use in Confucian and Taoist religions and provided deeper insights on the words of Buddha. So, after a first semantic fraternization with the other religions of China, Buddhism began to stand out, thanks to the work of Kumarajiva.^[5] The drafting of a Buddhist Canon in Chinese created a very significant response and variations from the different Buddhist schools and the composition of the commentaries that followed, completed a vertigo of religious contributions that were capable of interacting with the Chinese civilization for centuries to come and continues even today. In fact, the Buddhist Canon in the Chinese language contains the so-called “*Sutra of Hui Neng*”, or “Platform Sutra”, which is a classic of Chan Buddhism/Zen originally written in Chinese. The Diamond Sutra is a compact Sutra, and the commentary of the Master Taino is short and concise and does not address philosophy or theory, as similar to the practice of koan where things are seen and considered in a straight way. The approach of all the methods of this school is experiential, not only paradoxical, but goes to the heart of the issues in a simple, basic, and easy to

[4] Nirvana and void (emptiness/voidness = shunyata) are two important words in Buddhism that, over the centuries, have had several interpretations. Nirvana is about the liberation of the Samyak Sambodhi, the supreme unsurpassed enlightenment. The insight about voidness belongs to an intimate experience of perception in which – all at the same time - everything is freed from any labeled meaning; you are one with whatever is experienced and a snowy silence is perceived everywhere and displayed in every action. And there is no more striving to realize it.

[5] Chinese version of the Diamond Sutra printed in 868 AD, one of the world’s oldest printed books. bally but never recognized by the Swiss psychoanalyst.

understand way by all, with examples related to everyday life, concerning the victories, the frustrations and the hopes experienced by all humanity, which is the playground where enlightenment has to be realized. A “Rinzai” approach is not having a definite point of view, which may seem utopian, anti-ritualistic or relativistic. On the contrary, this non-point-of-view becomes a necessary challenge to maintain when you want to teach the real, alive Dharma and to be understood by everyone. Even those who have had even the slightest experience of it, despite not being monks or Buddhists, know that they do not need to yearn for a secluded life. This is for those who want to achieve in their lives the Samyak Sambodhi, the Supreme Awakening, whether it be a housewife, an employee, a worker, an entrepreneur, or an artist. Opening our eyes is what it is all about, because we discovered in our realization that they were always opened, and for this we saw everything perfectly well as we entered the Temple and when we had to catch the train. If we want to believe that in the “somewhere else realm” there is greater splendor than what we can imagine, probably we cannot see that it is here while we bring the dog for a walk. That is what the Buddha taught though he never spoke of “bringing the dog out for a walk” but certainly of Anapanasati, the awareness of breathing in the present moment. Even Zen, when it comes to an “elsewhere” for example, talks about the Bodhisattva - commonly considered a kind of angelic figure who lives in a parallel sphere of existence - always mentions something that is here, not only a deity but also a person of flesh and blood. In Zen, when it comes to Sambhogakaya - typically defined by the philosophers of Mahayana as the “*Body of Visionary Bliss*” - we pretend that this philosophical word must be a fact experienced now. Therefore, Hui neng and Rinzai considers the Sambhogakaya as the unfolding of our daily activities experienced in the continuum of our Anapanasati state or, better to say, in a real, naked perception of space/time. Something, in some ways, to conquer, but at the same time, everybody lives without wanting to know, being that the experience is too deep within themselves. A pristine state of presence and bliss that is not commonly recognized happens because of continuous, unuseful,

and painful striving for happiness that always remains outside of us. To stop that striving, but at the same time giving complete attention and energy to this naked experience of perception, is the key to the non-quietistic and non-ritualistic Rinzai practice, where *zazen*^[6] is important but not all, where you learn from now how to live your meditative state in every condition whatsoever and, even more, how to enter and exit through all circumstances of your life. About the naked experience of void, I once heard a nice story about Subhūti, who was renowned for his deep insight about void; and for this reason, one day, the Gods wanted to greet and celebrate him and they appeared in his cave, playing melodious instruments and singing words like *“O Venerable, thank you for your sermon on void!”* Subhūti answered that, actually, he did not say nor think about that and that he was just roasting some chestnuts. And the second line of the gods’s song was *“O Venerable, yes, we know, that was your sermon! Thank you again. What an inconceivable beauty!”* The Master who commented on this Sutra, Engaku Taino, Luigi Mario, was born in Rome in 1938. As a mountain enthusiast since his early years, he became a Mountain Guide in 1959, and he became a qualified ski instructor in 1965 in Canada and a climbing instructor in 1985. In 1962, he abandoned his job and became the manager of a mountain lodge. After an initial interest in the philosophy of Jiddu Krishnamurti, he moved to Japan to have direct contact with the Zen tradition. Even in this new country, he worked as a ski instructor. Being accepted into the Monastery of Shofukuji, Kobe, he became a monk by the name of Engaku Taino on April 8, 1971 and the personal servant of Yamada Roshi Mumon. In Japan, he married Kiyoka Murakami in 1973, and in the same year, he returned to Italy. They restored an old farmhouse in the countryside outside Orvieto that became the first seed of the Temple Zenshinji.

[6] Zazen is the usual meditation performed in all the Zen Temples and Centers of any school and lineage since the times of the sixth Patriarch Hui Neng. Now we know, thanks to the new discoveries in the Dunghuan cave, that until the fifth Patriarch, Hung Jen, the Ch’an monks meditated mainly with visualizations, on the Sutras, being in their daily duties and in their inner question about “who is...” walking, seeing, eating, which is the hua t’ou.

In the following years, his two sons were born, Lea and Alvis. In 1985, he graduated in Philosophy from Padua with a thesis on Lin Chi, Dr. Giangiorgio Pasqualotto being his advisor. Many people have visited the Italian Rinzai Temple Zenshinji including the Masters Mumon Yamada, referred to later, Kono Taitso currently Kanchosan at Myoshinji, Shodo Harada Roshi of Sogenji, as well as the Masters Sochu Suzuki Roshi of Ryutakuji^[7], and Hozumi Gensho, who now teaches in an international Zendo in Kyoto and in the west, being in charge of the interfaith dialogue for the Rin-zai Shu. Over the decades, thousands of people have practiced, in Zenshinji, the way of Rinzai Shu as taught by Zen Master Engaku Taino who developed the koan^[8] system in a more subtle but comprehensible way to be more effective for westerners and introduced into his teachings new Do (Ways), incorporating climbing, poetry, taichi and other disciplines. Monks and lay practitioners commonly call Zenshinji Temple “*Scaramuccia*”, which is the topographic name of the hill where the temple resides. An enthusiastic participant in the foundation of this temple was Master Yamada Mumon Roshi, considered the most outstanding Dharma Master of the twentieth century in Japan. Yamada Mumon was Rector of the Hanazono University in 1949, and in 1978 became the Holder of the three thousand temples and monasteries of the Rin-zai Shu, dependent on the Myoshinji Temple. In Japan, many often state that he was the Hakuin of the past century, comparing him to the Master of the eighteenth century who revolutionized the teaching of the Rin-zai School. Life in Zenshinji, Orvieto, Italy, as in every Rin-zai Zen temple, tends to be not a life in solitary confinement in a dim light where one sits cross-legged, but having an experience where the challenges are great and confronted using the power of meditation and won through self-confidence and thrust.

[7] Ryutakuji is the Hakuin Zenji’s Monastery

[8] Koan are questions given by the Master to the Student. They constitute a meditative and educative path made to empower the practitioners to realize Enlightenment and to make it possible for them to learn how to enter and exit from all circumstances of life.

I want to add some more lines by the Master Yamada Mumon:

Rinzai Zen is distinguished from the other Zen schools by its brusque and somewhat martial disposition. Its central concern is “*the person who is master in all places,*” whose effortless activity is a giving and taking away, creating and annihilating absolutely at will, with the “*sword that kills, and the sword that gives life.*” This is one reason the school has been given the label “*Shōgun Zen,*” and no doubt also accounts for the great success it enjoyed in the past among the samurai classes of Japan. (...) I believe that Zen, particularly Rinzai Zen, has a significant role in the present world. Modern people are adrift amid the great confusion and uncertainty of contemporary life.”^[9]

This is why people gather in a Meditation room putting this powerful, definitive energy together: this is the meaning of the word sesshin, “union of the hearts”, where one does not strive for peace nor to be afraid of gaining strength. For sure, in this way, Satori is not chased nor denied, but realized. Having had the good fortune to receive instruction from Master Engaku Taino and Master Yamada Mumon, it is with gratitude that I wanted to translate and transmit this text in English with the passionate work of my Student, Janet Sambucetti, and the financial and technical assistance of many benefactors that will have the merit to spread this wonderful Sutra all over the world. In the first draft of the text in Italian, Master Engaku Taino collaborated with Master Franco Camin Shihan and Master Ileana Pinter Seikyu, whom I thank. A term used by the Christian mystic Meister Eckart.

[9] Mumon Roshi from the foreword of *The Record of Linji 臨濟錄*. Translation and commentary by Ruth Fuller Sasaki.



1979 - From the top and starting from the left in the picture:

The group on the left: Carlo D'Angelo Rogan, Andrea Toniatti Anryu, Luca Sarchi, Li Ai Vee Gyoku Ran.
In the center of the picture is Master Yamada Mumon.

The group on the right is: Andrea Sarchi, Lamberto Liverani, Leonardo Anfolsi Reiyo Ekai, Andrea Banzola, Master Noritake Shunan, Master Luigi Mario Engaku Taino and Maurizio Zeppilli Ghencho.

REALIZING THE PATH THROUGH THE DIAMOND SUTRA

How to use the teachings contained in this book

By Zen Master Leonardo Anfolsi Reiyo

In this book you have a basic, easier, translation of the Diamond Sutra, a complete translation and a commentary. With these three tools – functioning as a first-aid koan - and with meditation, you can see and understand your free mind not leaning on anything. Having a free mind not leaning on anything means that upon being born, we are challenged to understand deeper and deeper the power of this real mind of ours that is already functioning but has to be completely unfolded.

About the argument Master Engaku Taino says:

“First of all is the desire that drives us to enter into a certain path. Then traveling on that path you will perceive the scents, you will see colors and landscapes, so you will hear the voices that are peculiar to that path. Of course, it takes an effort to get started and we do not know who moves our will or who takes the initial step giving us confidence in the path, some “thing” that makes us keep going. But going forward we must be able to grow a steadfast faith in ourselves, we absolutely have to find that strength in ourselves, finally letting us flow and remain in the conviction that we are already on the path, that we are already the enlightenment and therefore the practice itself. And here it is the experience of enlightenment!”

So, in some ways there is nothing you can do because this free mind is already you, but at the same time you have a lot of work to do, because living this mind fully is a total challenge. Training with this Sutra can really unfold your silent understanding of life.

For this reason, after you read these lines:

It is crucial to practice some Meditation to re-integrate this understanding of yours within the lines and continue enjoying it daily by yourself and together with other practitioners; if you are not Buddhist just remain in silence letting go all your pretenses and tensions, being sure of the silent, divine inspiration therein. Then you can start reading some lines of the commentary by Master Engaku Taino and try to understand his practical approach to the Sutra, getting rid of the analytic, sub-logical mind. There you can discover that mind that is in silence but, at the same time, is active able to overcome every problem. And then read the basic, easier version of the Sutra – if you prefer – and enjoy it, finding your understanding within every statement and paradox. If you like, you can even go on with the commentary and jump from one and the other again and again in a way that you understand something more of it. Then you can fully enjoy the complete version. So you remain for some moments deeply surprised of your understanding, innocence here is part of the picture otherwise you can cynically forget to celebrate this inner victory of yours. You merge with a higher meaning that spreads all over the reading, still surprising you every time and so you merge with a higher meaning that appears all over in your life – silently taking the form of things, people, and circumstances; you know for sure that something is starting to light up inside yourself, something that you can no more understand as a thing nor a reference, and so you know that the raw acceptance of this lack of confirmation begins to set you free and makes you active, insightful, but still able to rest at will. In fact, the first symptom is that you don't like the club of the *“very sensitive and spiritual people very close to enlightenment” anymore, but you achieve the state of those “simple/wonderful people who are just what they are.”*

Somebody states that Meditation is even not knowing that you are not thinking but, funny to say, we have to decide a lot of things in our life and for this reason we have to think often, something that tricks a lot of the most serious Meditation practitioners. On the contrary, some other people think that *“taking life as it is”* is

all they need and they would like to kill the Buddha as soon as they meet him, and they say that while fishing or collecting shells on the seashore, they deeply practice Meditation without wasting their time cross-legged. But, in both cases, not knowing our free mind as it is might remain the real problem. And this is the reason why wiser people go on living their own life sincerely, practicing Meditation. One very day, because of this challenge, living with all our strength beyond hope or fear, it happens that you raise your arm while cleaning a window and you know that is really all... And you sense, feel or think, experiencing an exploded silence.

You are not leaning on anything.
Here starts the real Zen training.

TECHNIQUES TO APPROACH MEDITATION EASILY THROUGH THE DIAMOND SUTRA

This chapter goes back to the beginning of the Zen tradition, when the Zen practitioners were a bunch of monks hosted in monasteries of different schools. Bodhidharma's arrival in China had a strange impact on the Buddhism of that time, a slow, sneaky effect. He just sat in front of the wall of a cave. What was he doing? We don't know and probably his sayings were just credited to him, but we know that another teacher, Gunabhadra, with a similar challenging behavior and methods, came to China a century before him, saying the same things. The fifth heir of this solitary tradition, Hung jen, explained a method of practice in a text that was not zazen but a very complex visualization contained in a minor sutra called the Sutra on the Contemplation of Buddha Amitayus (Kanmuryojukyo, or Meditation Sutra) and also explained other techniques that bring the mind to a silence during sitting meditation. Remarkable is the fact that Bodhidharma taught athletic and inner practices to the monks of Shaolin, from which the forms of boxing today commonly called Kung Fu have been distilled. In a similar way, some yogic techniques were taught in the Zen monasteries, during the Tang Dynasty, that were still known by Master Xu yun (1840–1959). Hakuin Ekaku taught Naikan techniques to his XVIII century Japanese students to train the practitioners in breathing and visualization. This is to say that to teach “Zen” techniques that make it easy to begin and ripen the practice of meditation in a proper way is not a new thing. More, being that in the West we do not have even a basic Buddhist culture, it is necessary that all the students begin a personal inquiry on those Sutras that constitute the basis of their spiritual heritage, examples being the Diamond Sutra and the Heart Sutra for the Zen Obaku, Rinzai and Soto schools.