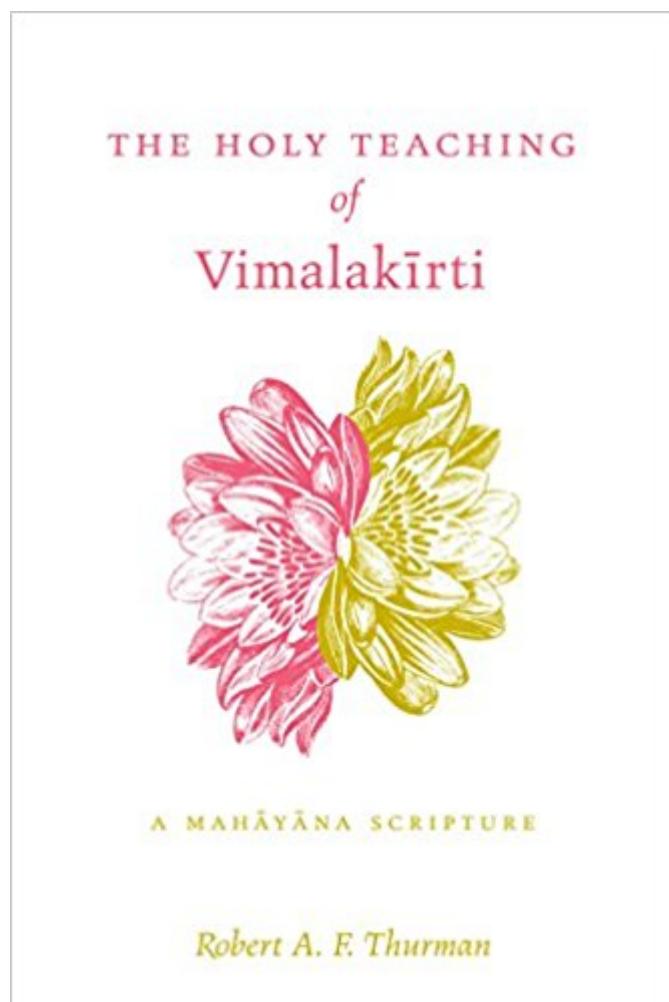


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The Holy Teaching Of Vimalakirti: A Mahayana Scripture



Synopsis

This book presents the major teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism in a precise, dramatic, and even humorous form. For two millennia this Sūtra, called the “jewel of the Mahāyāna Sūtras,” has enjoyed immense popularity among Mahāyāna Buddhists in India, central and southeast Asia, Japan, and especially China, where its incidents were the basis for a style in art and literature prevalent during several centuries. Robert Thurman’s translation makes available in relatively nontechnical English the Tibetan version of this key Buddhist scripture, previously known to the English-speaking world only through translations from Chinese texts. The Tibetan version is generally conceded to be more faithful to the original Sanskrit than are the Chinese texts. The Tibetan version also is clearer, richer, and more precise in its philosophical and psychological expression. The twelve books of the Sūtra are accompanied by an introduction and an epilogue by Dr. Thurman and by three glossaries: Sanskrit terms, numerical categories, and technical terms.

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Customer Reviews

The Vimalakirti-nirdesha Sutra, though almost certainly not spoken by Shakyamuni Buddha himself, is nonetheless held in the highest esteem by all schools of the Mahayana. It belongs to the category of sutras which are, in all probability, fictional creations of Mahayana scholars, and not expounded by the Buddha. Despite this, the Vimalakirti Scripture is still given the title of a sutra. For the doctrine it expounds is in perfect conformity with the highest teachings of the Buddha, and, more than any other sutra, the Vimalakirti Sutra shows the perfection of the bodhisattva ideal for laymen and

women. Robert A.F. Thurman's translation of this masterpiece is close to perfect. Working from a Tantric perspective (being himself a Vajrayana Buddhist), Thurman details, in his notes and introduction, the clear relation between Buddhist Tantrism and the Vimalakirti sutra, which can lead one to the conclusion that its composition was largely influenced by the esoteric teachings of the Tantras. Yet, the teachings of the Vimalakirti Sutra are in no way exclusive to students of the Vajrayana, or of Tibetan Buddhism in general. This scripture has historically been of tremendous influence on Chinese Buddhism, and is the subject of some of the greatest works of Chinese Buddhist Art. It is also held in the highest esteem by Zen Buddhism for its emphasis on the practice of the layman amongst the cares of the world. Indeed, it is one of the few canonical scriptures that are of particular value to Zen.

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