



# ENTERING THE ANCIENT CITY OF VAISHALI





Thank you for your kind words and generous offering, I feel humbled and rejoice in making an auspicious connection to your Dharma community in this way. Thank you!

I am from Holland, but live now in Denmark with my daughter Arya Mandarava Rose. I consider Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche and Erik Pema Kunsang to be my main Dharma teachers. They have encouraged and inspired me to chant dharma texts in English. This is a work in progress of which some examples can be found on [www.vajrasound.com](http://www.vajrasound.com).

Recently I have started to focus more and more on Sutra recitations, and we have been gathering with Dharma friends over the last years to recite Sutra's together. I hope it will of support to Dharma practitioners all over the world, and I am overjoyed to hear it is being used at your Dharma center. I feel encouraged to record more, and aspire to be able to spend more and more time to serve Dharma. So thank you all from the bottom of my heart!

May the virtue of reciting together with pure motivation be of benefit for the wellbeing and liberation of each and every living being! And may the Sutra 'Entering the city of Vaisali', indeed dispel the pandemic and other adverse circumstances, and make compassion and wisdom grow.



# THE MUSIC AND MUSICIAN

---

- Our text is from a set of translations
- <https://read.84000.co/tranlation/toh312.html>
- And the music is from a website called VajraSound
- <https://vajrasound.com/>
- The musician is a young Dutch man named Rodrigo Reijers

# ORIGINAL SUTRAS LOOKED LIKE THIS



# WHAT IS A SUTRA?

---

- Sanskrit word meaning ‘thread’ or ‘string’ but now used for the discourses of the Buddha Shakyamuni
- Same derivation as ‘suture’ and ‘to sew’
- Oral teachings on a thread—a theme
- Collected in the second part of the Buddhist cannon known as the Tripitaka, ‘three baskets’ of teachings
  - The precepts, the sutras and the commentaries
- Most spoken by Ananda, one of Buddha’s disciples who was known for a word-perfect memory
- Each sutra is an independent text



# WHAT IS A SUTRA? **THUS I HAVE HEARD...**

---

- In the Pali Canon of the Theravadin tradition, the sutras are divided into 5 collections known as the Nikayas, grouped in order of length
- Along with those, many Mahayana sutras have also been preserved—originally composed in Sanskrit, they are now mostly in Tibetan, Chinese, Korean and Japanese; and are thought to have been composed between first century BCE and the 6th century CE
- This collection of sutras can be divided into two currents of tradition: 1) sutras based on faith or devotion and 2) philosophically oriented sutras on things like emptiness and buddhanature. These are not the direct oral teachings of Buddha.



# STRUCTURE OF THIS SUTRA

---

- The words that the Buddha instructs Ānanda to pronounce at the city gates can be grouped into three main categories:
  - 1) commands mainly addressed to nonhuman beings to depart, disperse, and stop causing harm, backed up by the invoking of the authority of other more powerful nonhuman beings both awakened and worldly;
  - 2) the long mantra, most of which consists of syllables without evident semantic content and is presumably intended to work its effects through supernatural or magical mechanisms in relation to its sounds; and
  - 3) the *svastigāthā* verses, most of which are addressed principally (but not exclusively) to the city's human inhabitants and convey goodness and well-being by proclaiming and describing the qualities of the Three Jewels—compassion, purity, wisdom, and spiritual power.
- Some elements belong to more than one category: the commanding words retained (in the Tibetan translation) in Sanskrit, perhaps in order to conserve their authoritative power, which are also in a sense mantras, and the verses at the end addressed to spirits to tame them by invoking their better natures.

# WHERE IS VAISHALI?



# YOU CAN VISIT VAISHALI EVEN TODAY

---







## WHO WAS ANANDA?

---

- Primary attendant of the Buddha
- His first-cousin, born about the same time as the Buddha
- One of the 10 principal disciples
- Known for word-perfect memory
- When Buddha was about 55, Ananda became the Buddha's assistant, secretary and intermediary at the Buddha's request and on the stipulation he receive no material compensation.
- Played an important role in the establishment of the *bhiksuni* [Skt] tradition
- Known for loving devotion and compassion
- Was a teacher often praised by the Buddha

# THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE SUTRA

---

- Thus did I hear at one time: The Blessed One was residing in Nāḍikā, at the Impenetrable Dwelling Place.<sup>26</sup> The Blessed One said to the venerable Ānanda, “Ānanda, let us proceed to the city of Vaiśhālī.”
- Though it’s not certain—the current thinking, piecing together from various accounts is that the Buddha and his disciples were on their final journey north before the Buddha’s death.
- They were staying in Rajagrha under the patronage of King Ajatasatru, when a messenger came from the Vaishali, saying that there was an epidemic there and asking if the Buddha would come cure it. The people of that area had been at war with King Ajatasatru, so the Buddha asked his assent and he agreed. They made their way, teaching, arriving at Nadkia, where there was another epidemic. Several of the Buddha’s students died—wherein the Buddha delivered a famous teaching on the 12 interdependent links of causation.

# THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE SUTRA

---

- The party then proceeded to Vaishali, where Ananda did just as the Buddha said.
- The epidemic was quelled, according to an account in *The Chapter on Medicines*.
  - This story is pieced together in from accounts in several places.

# AMRAPALI – A COURTESAN OF VAISHALI



# FOLX YOU SHOULD GET TO KNOW

---

- Arhat: one who has attained the cessation of all mental afflictions
- Bhuta: spirits or ghosts, malevolent or positive
- Brahma: one of the gods
- Demigods: also called asuras—often have disruptive effects on cosmological and social harmony
- Four Protectors of the World: The Four Great Kings of the cardinal directions



# FOLX YOU SHOULD GET TO KNOW

---

- Indra: a god
- Isana: one of the guardians of the directions, Isana guards the NE quarter
- Kameshvara: Lord of Desire
- Mara: the personification of conceptual and emotional obstacles
- Prajapati: a god
- Pratyekabuddha: one who has attained liberation solely through their own contemplation, but unlike a Buddha, does not have the merit and motivation to teach others.
- Sakra: Lord of the gods. (Indra)

# LITERAL TRANSLATION OF MANTRIC WORDS & MANTRA

---

- **Visarata! Visarata! Visarata!** - Disperse! Meaning here to thoroughly pacify, quell
- **Muncata! Muncata! Muncata!** - Move! Move! Move!
- **Ksipram nirgacchata sva ha!** - Depart quickly! So be it! (or 'may it be so')
- **Nirgacchata** - Depart!
- The long mantra has no literal translation.
  - It's recording varies slightly among historical documents
- Tibetan pronunciation of Sanskrit mantra is slightly different. 'Sva ha', for example is 'so ha'
  - This may be attributed to accent, not more

# MANTRA IN PRACTICE

---





# QUESTIONS?

---

- The text for the sutra, with commentary
  - <https://read.84000.co/tranlation/toh312.html>
- The music for the chant
  - <https://vajrasound.com/>

thank  
you!