

# Lotus Sūtra's Life Span of the Tathāgata

Myōhōrengekyō Nyōrai Juryō Honge

(Verse from Chapter 16, Taisho Tripitaka 262)

translated from Sanskrit by Tripitaka Master Kumārajīva, 344-413

(appeared ~2<sup>nd</sup> century, see trans. & intro. by Gene Reeves, Burton Watson)

translated by the Sōtō Zen Text Project

## 妙法蓮華經如來壽量品偈

自我得佛來 Since I attained Buddhahood,  
所經諸劫數 the number of kalpas that have passed  
無量百千萬 is incalculable hundreds, thousands, myriads, and billions  
億載阿僧祇 of long eons.  
常說法教化 Constantly I have voiced the Dharma,  
無數億衆生 teaching countless millions of living beings,  
令入於佛道 so that they entered the Buddha Way;  
爾來無量劫 all this for immeasurable kalpas.  
為度衆生故 In order to liberate all beings,  
方便現涅槃 as skillful means I appear to have entered nirvana;  
而實不滅度 yet truly I am not extinct,  
常住此說法 ever dwelling here to voice the Dharma.  
我常住於此 I forever abide in this world,  
以諸神通力 but use my powers of spiritual penetration  
令顛倒衆生 so that confused living beings,  
雖近而不見 though nearby, fail to see me.  
衆見我滅度 All those viewing me as extinct  
廣供養舍利 everywhere venerate my relics;  
咸皆懷戀慕 all harbor feelings of yearning,  
而生渴仰心 and arouse adoring hearts.  
衆生既信伏 When beings have become sincerely faithful,  
質直意柔軟 honest and upright, with gentle intention,  
一心欲見佛 wholeheartedly wishing to behold the Buddha,  
不自惜身命 not begrudging their own bodily lives,  
時我及衆僧 then I and the assembled sangha  
俱出靈鷲山 appear together on sacred Vulture Peak.  
我時語衆生 Then I tell the living beings  
常在此不滅 that in this world I abide without end,  
以方便力故 by the power of expedient means,  
現有滅不滅 appearing to be extinct, or not.  
餘國有衆生 Other lands contain living beings,  
恭敬信樂者 reverent with faith aspiring;  
我復於彼中 among them as well,

為說無上法 I give voice to supreme Dharma.  
汝等不聞此 You who do not hear this  
但謂我滅度 only suppose I am passed into extinction.  
我見諸衆生 I behold the living beings,  
沒在於苦海 drowning in the sea of suffering.  
故不為現身 Hence I do not reveal myself,  
令其生渴仰 but set them all to yearning,  
因其心戀慕 till when their hearts are filled with longing,  
乃出為說法 I then emerge and proclaim the Dharma.  
神通力如是 With such pervasive spiritual power,  
於阿僧祇劫 for uncountable kalpas  
常在靈鷲山 I abide on sacred Vulture Peak,  
及餘諸住處 and every other dwelling place.  
衆生見劫盡 When living beings see the kalpa's end,  
大火所燒時 with all consumed in a great blaze,  
我此土安隱 my domain stays serene and calm,  
天人常充滿 ever filled with human and heavenly beings,  
園林諸堂閣 gardens and groves, pavilions and palaces,  
種種寶莊嚴 adorned with every kind of gem,  
寶樹多華菓 and jeweled trees lush with flowers and fruit,  
衆生所遊樂 where living beings delight and play.  
諸天擊天鼓 The heavenly beings beat celestial drums,  
常作衆伎樂 ever making pleasing music,  
雨曼陀羅華 showering white mândārava flowers  
散佛及大衆 over Buddha and the great assembly.  
我淨土不毀 My pure land is not destroyed,  
而衆見燒盡 yet all view it as ravaged by fire,  
憂怖諸苦惱 so that fear and distress  
如是悉充滿 pervade everywhere.  
是諸罪衆生 The beings vexed with their offenses,  
以惡業因緣 caused by their unwholesome karma,  
過阿僧祇劫 through vast rounds of kalpas,  
不聞三寶名 hear not the name of the Three Treasures.  
諸有修功德 But those who practice virtuous deeds,  
柔和質直者 are gentle, upright, and sincere,  
則皆見我身 these all see that I exist,  
在此而說法 abiding here, proclaiming Dharma.  
或時為此衆 At times for the sake of that assembly,  
說佛壽無量 I describe Buddha's life span as immeasurable;  
久乃見佛者 for those who after great lengths see the Buddha,  
為說佛難值 I explain how rarely Buddha is encountered.  
我智力如是 Such is the power of my wisdom,  
慧光照無量 with beams of insight shining beyond measure;  
壽命無數劫 this life span of countless kalpas

久修業所得 was gained from long-cultivated practice.  
汝等有智者 You who are possessed of wisdom,  
勿於此生疑 in regards to this, entertain no doubts;  
當斷令永盡 cast them off, forever ended,  
佛語實不虛 for Buddha's words are true, not false.  
如醫善方便 Like the good physician who with skillful means,  
為治狂子故 in order to cure his delirious children,  
實在而言死 although truly alive spreads word he is dead  
無能說虛妄 yet cannot be charged with falsehood,  
我亦為世父 I too, as parent of the world,  
救諸苦患者 savior of all suffering and afflicted,  
為凡夫顛倒 for the sake of confused, worldly people,  
實在而言滅 although truly living, am thought to be extinct.  
以常見我故 If due to always seeing me,  
而生憍恣心 their hearts become selfish and arrogant,  
放逸著五欲 dissolute and set on the five desires,  
墮於惡道中 they would fall into evil destinies.  
我常知衆生 I always know which living beings  
行道不行道 practice the Way, and which do not;  
隨應所可度 in accord with what their salvation requires,  
為說種種法 I give voice to the various teachings,  
每自作是念 ever making this my thought:  
以何令衆生 how can I cause the living beings  
得入無上道 to enter into the unsurpassed Way  
速成就佛身 and promptly embody Buddha?