



THE ASIAN CLASSICS

INSTITUTE

Thank you for your interest in the Asian Classics Institute's Correspondence Courses. A complete Formal Study Course consists of audio recordings from the original class series in New York, along with the supporting text materials from each class. The text and audio may be downloaded (see www.world-view.org in the on-line teachings section), or ordered by mail (see the Courses by mail section of the web site).

This Course consists of eleven classes, each of which has approximately one hour of audio, along with corresponding written materials. The audio can be listened to on-line as streaming Real Audio, or downloaded onto your computer for playback later. The written materials for this Course are contained in nine on-line files which can be downloaded, printed and assembled into a three-ring binder.

A complete Course binder contains the following sections in this order: a binder cover and spine, an overview of the teacher training program, prayers, a course syllabus, readings, class notes, homework, quizzes, a final examination, answer keys and Tibetan study materials. (The class notes were taken by a student in the original live classes, and you'll need these for reference as what's written on the board isn't always spoken.) For ease of binder assembly, be sure to print the files on three hole paper.

Please note that Geshe Michael taught the first half of each class in this Course. The second half of each class was conducted in smaller study groups, and was led by a student teacher. The second half of each class was not recorded.

Each class lecture has a corresponding reading, homework, quiz, meditation, and class notes. After listening to the audio from a class, the reading, homework, quiz and meditation should be completed for that class before continuing on to the next class. The homework can be completed using your class notes, open book style. The quizzes should be completed from memory only, without the aid of notes or other materials. (A good approach is to look at an answer key *after* you have finished that homework, and to use that answer key to study for that quiz.) A final exam is given at the end of the Course.

You may grade your own papers using the supplied answer keys if you wish to do so. All of the quiz questions come from the homework, and the homework answer keys are also used to grade the quizzes and the final exam. Please note that in this review Course not all of the final exam questions are taken from the quizzes; some final exam questions are not on the quizzes, but are taken from the homework.

This review Course is **not** available to be graded by the Institute as a correspondence course. ***Please do not mail in any of the homework or quizzes for grading.*** To receive credit and a certificate of completion for a review Course, it must be taken in person with a teacher approved by the Institute.

We would like to emphasize that, although recordings and written materials can be extremely helpful, it is essential for serious Buddhist practitioners to meet and study directly with a qualified Teacher who can give the necessary guidance and personal instructions of the lineage.

In these teachings the wisdom of Enlightened Beings has been passed down in an unbroken lineage to you. May you take these teachings and put them into practice in your life to benefit all. May every goodness grow and spread in all directions right now!



Overview of the Formal Study Course Teacher Training Program

The Six Great Books of Buddhism outlined below are the subject of a geshe's eighteen year program of monastic study. The Asian Classics Institute condenses these Six Great Books of Buddhism into a series of 15 Formal Study Courses.

Book One

Geshe Study Subject: The Perfection of Wisdom (Prajnya Paramita)

School of Buddhism Studied: Beginning Middle-Way (Madhyamika Svatantrika); also includes some material from Mind-Only (Chitta Matra)

Main Root Text: *The Jewel of Realization (Abhisamaya Alamkara)*

Written by: Maitreya (the Future Buddha) as related to Master Asanga, circa 350 AD

Traditional period to cover this subject: Six years in a Tibetan monastery

Summarized in ACI Courses:

Course II: Buddhist Refuge

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Principal monastic textbooks used for ACI Courses: *Analysis of the Perfection of Wisdom, Overview of the Art of Interpretation, Overview of the Twenty Practitioners, Overview of Dependent Origination, Overview of the Form and Formless*

Written by: Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568); Gyalwang Trinley Namgyal (fl. 1850)

Typical Subjects: The three kinds of refuge; The wish for enlightenment; What is nirvana?; The proofs for emptiness; Who is Maitreya?; The twelve links of dependent origination in the Wheel of Life; Deep levels of meditation; How do we know when the Buddha was speaking figuratively?; A flow-chart for liberation.

Book Two

Geshe Study Subject: The Middle Way (Madhyamika)

School of Buddhism Studied: Advanced Middle Way (Madhyamika Prasangika); also includes some material from the Mind-Only School (Chitta Matra)

Main Root Texts: *Entering the Middle Way (Madhyamaka Avatara)* and *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life (Bodhisattva Charya Avatara)*

Written by: The first by Master Chandrakirti, circa 650 AD in explanation of Master Nagarjuna, about 200 AD; and the second by Master Shantideva, circa 700 AD

Traditional period to cover this subject: Four years in a Tibetan monastery

Summarized in ACI Courses:

Course VI: The Diamond-Cutter Sutra

Course VII: The Vows of the Bodhisattva

Courses X, XI, XII: A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life

Overview of the ACI Teacher Training Program

Principal monastic textbooks used for ACI Courses: *Overview of the Middle Way; A Commentary on the Diamond-Cutter Sutra; The String of Shining Jewels, on the Three Sets of Vows; The Point of Entry for Bodhisattvas, a Commentary to the "Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life"*

Written by: Gyaltsab Je Darma Rinchen (1364-1432); Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568); Choney Lama Drakpa Shedrup (1675-1748); Geshe Tsewang Samdrup (c. 1830)

Typical Subjects: Emptiness and the Wish for enlightenment; Emptiness and the bodies of a Buddha; The future of the Buddha's teaching; Emptiness and karma; The direct perception of emptiness; Emptiness and paradise; How empty things still work; The root and secondary vows of a bodhisattva; How to keep the vows; How to purify bad deeds; Taking joy; How to fight mental afflictions; The perfection of giving; How anger destroys good karma; The nature of anger; Where bad things really come from; Dealing with jealousy; Quietude; Stopping attachment; On the joys of solitude; Devoting oneself to meditation; On the need to see emptiness; The two realities; The emptiness of feelings; The sliver of Diamond.

Book Three

Geshe Study Subject: Higher Knowledge (Abhidharma)

School of Buddhism Studied: Detailist (Vaibhashika)

Main Root Text: *The Treasure House of Higher Knowledge (Abhidharma Kosha)*

Written by: Master Vasubandhu, circa 350 AD

Traditional period to cover this subject: Two years in a Tibetan monastery

Summarized in ACI Courses:

Course V: How Karma Works

Course VIII: Death and the Realms of Existence

Principal monastic textbooks used for ACI Courses: *Light on the Path to Freedom, a Commentary to the Treasure House*

Written by: Gyalwa Gendun Drup, the First Dalai Lama (1391-1474)

Typical Subjects: The nature of karma; The role of motivation; The correlation of deeds and their results; How karma is carried; The relative severity of deeds; The three realms of existence; The nature of the *bardo* (intermediate state between birth and death); A description of time and space; The destruction of the world; How to do death meditation

Book Four

Geshe Study Subject: Vowed Morality (Vinaya)

School of Buddhism Studied: Detailist (Vaibhashika)

Main Root Text: *A Summary of Vowed Morality (Vinaya Sutra)*

Written by: Master Gunaprabha, circa 500 AD

Traditional period to cover this subject: Two years in a Tibetan monastery

Summarized in ACI Course:

Course IX: The Ethical Life

Principal monastic textbooks used for ACI Course: *Essence of the Ocean of Discipline; Daymaker--A commentary on the "Essence of the Ocean"*

Written by: Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419), Master Ngulchu Dharma Bhadra (1772-1851)

Typical Subjects: The nature of the vows of freedom; Their divisions; The specific vows (note: nuns and monks' vows are presented only to those with ordination); Who can take vows; How vows are lost; The benefits of keeping vows.

Book Five

Geshe Study Subject: Buddhist Logic (Pramana)

School of Buddhism Studied: Sutrist (Sautrantika)

Main Root Text: *The Commentary on Valid Perception (Pramana Varttika)*

Written by: Master Dharmakirti, circa 650 AD, on Master Dignaga, circa 450 AD

Traditional period to cover this subject: Three months per year for 15 years in a Tibetan monastery

Summarized in ACI Courses:

Course IV: The Proof of Future Lives

Course XIII: The Art of Reasoning

Principal monastic textbooks used for ACI Courses: *The Four Reasonings; Light on the Path to Freedom, An Explanation of the Commentary on Valid Perception; Jewel of the True Thought; An Explanation of the Art of Reasoning; An Explanation of the Path of Reasoning; The Collected Topics of the Spiritual Son; The Collected Topics of Rato; A Clear Exposition upon Mind and Mental Functions*

Written by: Khen Rinpoche Geshe Lobsang Tharchin (b. 1921); Gyaltsab Je Darma Rinchen (1364-1432); The First Panchen Lama, Lobsang Chukyi Gyaltsen (1567?-1662); Geshe Yeshe Wangchuk (1928-1997); Master Tutor Purbuchok Jampa Tsultrim Gyatso (1825-1901); Master Ngawang Trashhi (c. 1700); Master Chok-hla U-ser (c. 1500)

Typical Subjects: The meaning of valid perception; The nature of omniscience; Proofs for past and future lives; The qualities of a Buddha; Why study the art of reasoning?; The definition of a reason; How to do Buddhist debate; The parts of a logical statement; Cause and effect; The nature of the subject mind; The concept of negatives and positives; The nature of definitions; The concept of time.

Book Six

Geshe Study Subject: The Steps to Buddhahood (Lam Rim)

School of Buddhism Studied: Advanced Middle Way (Madhyamika Prasangika)

Main Root Text: *The Great Book on the Steps to Buddhahood (Lam Rim Chenmo)*

Written by: Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419)

Traditional period to cover this subject: Intermittently over a period of 15 years in a Tibetan monastery

Overview of the ACI Teacher Training Program

Summarized in ACI Courses:

Course I: The Principal Teachings of Buddhism

Course III: Applied Meditation

Course XIV: Lojong, Developing the Good Heart

Principal monastic textbooks used for ACI Courses: *A Gift of Liberation, Thrust into Our Hands; The Principal Teachings of Buddhism; A Commentary on the Principal Teachings of Buddhism; A Thousand Angels of the Heaven of Bliss (Ganden Hlagyama); Preparing for Tantra (The "Source of All My Good" and its Commentary); A Collection of Lojong Texts; Offering of the Mandala; How to Offer the Mandala in Thirty-Seven Parts*

Written by: Khen Rinpoche Geshe Lobsang Tharchin (b. 1921); Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); Pabongka Rinpoche (1878-1941); Master Ngulchu Dharma Bhadra (1772-1851)

Typical Subjects: The Meaning of Rennciation, the Wish for enlightenment, and correct world view; How to do a daily practice; How to meditate; What to meditate on; How to practice at work and other everyday situations; How to offer the mandala; How to practice love and compassion; Brief presentations of the entire path to Enlightenment; How to prepare for the secret teachings.