



The Asian Classics Institute



Diamond Mountain University

Name:
Date:
Location:
Track:
Grade:

IN-DEPTH COURSE III

Master Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life Exploring the Border Between You and Me

Course Syllabus

Course Background and Syllabus

Please note! Master Shantideva's text, which is included in full in this reading, sounds easy to understand—but it's not. We strongly encourage you to read these verses in conjunction with listening to the audio tapes of explanation, or even better attend a course (such as those sponsored by ACI) where the verses are explained by a qualified teacher.

This third course of the ACI In-Depth Course Series presents the entire section on the practice of exchanging ourselves and others, which is a large part of the chapter on meditation (Chapter Eight) from *The Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (*Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra*, *Byang-chug sems-dpa'i spyod-pa la 'jug-pa*, digital text number TD3871 from the Asian Classics Input Project), by Master Shantideva (c. 700 AD).

This course is meant to give much more detail on this subject than the related original ACI course, "Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, Part Two" (ACI Course XI), which covered only about half of this section on exchanging ourselves and others.

The reading material for this course consists of the 84 relevant verses of Master Shantideva's root text, and includes both the original Sanskrit and the Tibetan translation of these verses. Following a pattern of the ACI courses as we go deeper now with the in-depth courses, we will be taking a closer look at the original Sanskrit versions of the root texts.

Our goal will be to glean more of the original feel of the Buddhism taught in the land of its birth, India, in a language—Sanskrit—which is directly related to modern languages like English that many of use. And so we will be taking a special interest in places where checking the original Sanskrit wording gives us insights that we may miss out on if we utilize only the Tibetan translation.

For our basic English translation and interpretation of each verse, we will continue to rely heavily upon the extraordinary commentary written by Gyaltsab Je Darma Rinchen (1364-1432), the eminent disciple of Je Tsongkapa who became the first holder of his throne after the Teacher passed on. This commentary is called *Entry Point for Children of the Victorious Buddhas* (*rGyal-sras 'jug-ngogs*, ACIP digital text S5436).

In-Depth Course II: Exploring the Border Between You and Me
Course Background and Syllabus

With this course though we will also be using perhaps the most important commentary from ancient India upon Master Shantideva's work. This is *The Commentary to Difficult Points in the "Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life"* (*Bodhicaryāvatāra Pañjikā*, *Byang-chub kyi spyod-pa la 'jug-pa'i dka' 'grel*, TD3872), composed by the Indian pandit Prajnyakara Mati (Prajñākaramati, or Shes-rab 'byung-gnas blo-gros in Tibetan). The literal meaning of this author's name is "The Intelligent One, the Source of Wisdom."

His explanation of our root text was of course written in Sanskrit; it was translated into Tibetan about a thousand years ago, and is found in the Tengyur collection of ancient commentaries to the word of Lord Buddha. It seems to have been one of the primary sources used by Gyaltsab Je for his own commentary. Because it was composed in part as a "word commentary," in the original Sanskrit, it sheds substantial new light on the meaning of Master Shantideva's text.

As with so many of the ancient Indian writers, our information about Prajnyakara Mati's life is scarce. Aside from his explanation of Master Shantideva's classic, he also composed a brief explanation of *The Ornament of Realizations* of Lord Maitreya—a text on the perfection of wisdom which forms the basis for several ACI courses. This work is also found in the Tengyur, and was translated by Ngok Londen Sherab, who was one of the teachers of Geshe Drolungpa, the author of *The Great Book on the Steps of the Teachings* (*bsTan-rim chen-mo*: the *Tenrim Chenmo*).

At least one catalog to the Tengyur also contains a reference to a commentary by Prajnyakara Mati on *The Letter to a Student*, composed by the early Indian master Chandragomin. This teacher's works also include an explanation of the bodhisattva vows that was used for the ACI course on the subject. The catalog goes on to make a special note here that Prajnyakara Mati wrote his commentary "out of a desire to benefit his own students."

We do read in numerous sources that Prajnyakara Mati was one of the six gatekeepers of the famous Indian Buddhist monastery of Vikramalashila, and that he shared this duty with none other than the illustrious Naropa. Naropa is said to have watched the northern gate, and Prajnyakara Mati the southern (although some sources also call him the Keeper of the Western Gate). We know that Master Naropa lived right around 1000 AD, so this helps dates Prajnyakara Mati as well.

The position of gatekeeper was a vital one for the monastery, since the keeper's main job was to intercept visiting masters of non-Buddhist traditions and, if necessary, engage in philosophical debate with them. The stakes were high, since the person who lost the debate—along with all everyone else living in his monastery or ashram—was required by custom to then give up his lineage and join that of the victor. We can imagine thus that Masters Naropa and Prajnyakara Mati were the best the monastery had to offer, and that they doubtless spent much time together, covering the same material. Certainly the teachings of the glorious Naropa and those of Master Shantideva complement each other perfectly.

One tradition, finally, states that Master Prajnyakara Mati reached a level where he could converse directly with Manjushri. This proved very useful in his frequent debates

In-Depth Course II: Exploring the Border Between You and Me
Course Background and Syllabus

with scholars from other traditions, and in once case it is said that he was slipped some answers he needed simply by making a request to a painting of this angel.

Master Shantideva himself was one of the most famous (or infamous) members of Vikramalashila's sister monastery, Nalanda. Before stepping into this in-depth course on his instructions for battling selfishness, you will want to read his traditional biography, attached here. Doubtless, the Master applied many of the methods of exchanging ourselves and others you will learn here to his own brothers at Nalanda.

List of Classes

Class One: Hands and Feet (Chapter VIII, Verses 89-94)

An introduction to dakshen nyamje: the two practices of treating oneself and others the same; and exchanging oneself and others. Which of the practices comes first, and why. Comments on defining "me." The question of whether others' pain hurts me. A logical proof that we must work to remove the sufferings of others.

Class Two: The Democracy of Love (Verses 95-103)

The favorite verses of His Holiness the current Dalai Lama. The idea of "me" over time, and in the present moment. "Me" as simply what we think of as "me." Metaphors for the unreality of "me." Self-existence and the idea of "me." Is there a difference between my pain and others' pain?

Class Three: The Lost Art of Sacrifice (Verses 104-110)

Others' needs, versus our own. Sacrificing one for the needs of many. Why sacrifice is not really sacrifice. The tale of the bodhisattva Lovely Flower of the Moon. Lower and higher freedom. Hoping for karmic rewards. The degree to which we protect and cherish others.

Class Four: The Great Switch (Verses 111-119)

Once again, the power of habit. The great switch from treating others equally to including them into "me." Self-cherishing directed at others and me. How to cherish a lot of other people. The question of whether my body is "me." Overcoming pride in working for others. Calling on the name of Loving Eyes (Avalokiteshvara, or Chenresik).

Class Five: The Highest of Secret Practices (Verses 120-129)

Exchanging ourselves and others, as a secret practice. The reasons why the practice is kept secret. The body as an enemy, and a temple. The difference between cherishing oneself and holding to things as self-existent. The negative deeds inspired by self-cherishing. Re-investing good things that come to us. Notes on how the Tibetans translated Sanskrit texts. The idea of depriving ourselves for others. Karmic results of the desire to be better than others. Where all the pain and happiness of the world comes from.

Class Six: Come and See the Difference (Verses 130-139)

The results of cherishing ourselves, rather than others. Cherishing others as a necessity for both the goals of this life, and future lives. Ourselves as the servants of others. Several meanings of "ignorance." The refusal to let go of self-cherishing. Two senses of giving up ourselves. The practice of offering our eyes. Others as first priority.

In-Depth Course II: Exploring the Border Between You and Me
Course Background and Syllabus

Class Seven: A Journey to the Dark Side (Verses 140-148)

Purposely practicing jealousy, competitiveness, and pride. How the practices are purified. The six aspects of jealousy. How to avoid getting discouraged. The heart-break of realizing who we are.

Class Eight: Sure He Becomes a Laughing-Stock (Verses 149-158)

More on practicing competitiveness. Making sure the bodhisattva becomes a laughing-stock. Things we can feel pride over, and how to excel in pride. What to do if—by chance—the bodhisattva should get some money. What to do if the bodhisattva relaxes. A summary of what self-cherishing has gotten us, over many lifetimes. Proof that we failed, in the past, to practice exchanging ourselves and others. Again, the power of habit.

Class Nine: Bossing the Bodhisattva Around (Verses 159-167)

The schizophrenia of getting something for ourselves. How to proceed, once we have switched. What to do if we see ourselves, or someone else, doing something wrong. How to react when others get some fame. Using our old bad karma. Doing the exchange with “style.” How to talk to our own mind.

Class Ten: I Have Sold You Now to Others (Verses 168-173)

The idea of “putting an end to the mind.” Smashing arrogance. Working for ourselves. Selling ourselves to others. What happens if we slip, after the sale. Fights we’ve had. Watching out for others to watch out for ourselves. The difference between getting what we want, and getting what we need. The ultimate need we supply to others, following the Master’s example.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MASTER SHANTIDEVA

The following story recounts in brief some of the events in the life of the great bodhisattva Shantideva. It is a paraphrase of sections from the *Life Stories of the Lineage Teachers of the Steps of the Path (Lam-rim bla-ma brgyud-pa'i rnam-thar)* written by Yongdzin Yeshe Gyeltsen (1713-1793), the teacher of the eighth Dalai Lama.

Master Shantideva was born to the west of Bodhgaya, the Seat of the Diamond, in a place called Yulkor Mosang. His father was a king named Armor of Virtue, and his mother was said to be an emanation of Vajra Yogini, the Angel of Diamond. He was able to choose the details of his birth, and when he was born he was given the name Armor of Peace. In his childhood he had all the favorable conditions that he needed, and from his earliest age he revealed himself to be a master of the traditional philosophical and other sciences. When he was six years old he met a great practitioner of the secret teachings, and received an initiation and a practice for reaching the enlightened being named Manjushri, or Gentle Voice. As a child he made great efforts in this practice, doing its meditations and reciting its secret words, and was soon able to meet Gentle Voice himself. After meeting this holy being, Master Shantideva was able to receive many teachings from him directly.

When his father the King passed away, all the people of the land requested Prince Shantideva to be King. Because he had practiced the bodhisattva path in many previous lives, he had no desire to live a life of royalty, but so as not to upset the people he agreed. The night before his crowning ceremony though he had a dream. In the dream he saw Gentle Voice sitting on the King's throne, and He said, "Son, this is my seat and I am your Teacher. It would be improper for us to sit on the same seat." Upon waking he realized that it was wrong for him to enjoy the pleasures of owning a kingdom, and he ran away.

Master Shantideva first went to Nalandra Monastery where he met the supreme leader of all the learned scholars there. His name was Angel of Virtue, and from this teacher he took the commitment to leave the home life. It also was from this master that he received the name Shantideva, which means "Angel of Peace." At the monastery he served his preceptor well, studied the three collections of scripture, and became a great scholar. He continued to receive many teachings from Gentle Voice himself, and was able to grasp the meaning of all the Buddha's teachings, both open and secret. He eliminated all the different kinds of distraction, both inner and outer, and with this incredible focus of mind he reached a very high spiritual level. He then composed the

In-Depth Course II: Exploring the Border Between You and Me
A Brief Biography of Master Shantideva

works entitled the *Compendium of Trainings*, the *Compendium of the Sutras*, and other books which describe the amazingly powerful and effective way of the life of a bodhisattva. Master Shantideva perfected within himself the three characteristics of a great Buddhist master—teaching, debating, and writing—and continued to rise up all the spiritual levels and paths. He achieved the ability to remember everything he had ever been taught, the ability to perform miracles effortlessly, and incredible clairvoyance; thus he became a god among bodhisattvas.

This was his inner life, but to the eyes of impure people Shantideva seemed to be interested in only three things: eating, sleeping, and going to the toilet. He thus became known by the name Bhusuku, which means "Mister Three Thoughts." Because the only fitting activity for a man who has left the home life is to involve himself in teaching, some of the monks who could not see who he really was perceived Master Shantideva as someone who was just living off the kindness of the laypeople, and decided that they should expel him from the monastery. They asked him to recite a scripture from memory before a gathering of the monastery, hoping that their request would cause him to decide to leave on his own. He answered them by saying, "How could someone like me ever be able to recite scripture?" and declined. However they insisted that he do so, and eventually he agreed.

The entire monastery was then invited to this gathering, and a very high throne was set up, one without any stairs—so there was no way for anyone to climb atop it. But when the bodhisattva Shantideva reached the front of the throne, he touched it gently, and without the slightest effort he appeared sitting on top of it. He then asked and said, "Would you like me to recite something you have heard before, or something which you have never heard?" The assembly asked that he recite something that they had not heard before, and so he began to recite that book which we call the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. He began at the very beginning of the text, and by the time he had gotten about a third of the way through the ninth chapter he began to rise up into the sky. He rose higher and higher, and it seemed as though the sky and his knowledge were pitted in competition, until he could no longer be seen at all, only heard. Then he totally disappeared.

Later on some of the monks who had clairvoyance of the ear, and others who were masters of total recall, pieced the whole book together. The group who were from Kashmir said that it had nine chapters, and the group from central India said it had ten. People then began to get curious about two of his other books which were mentioned in the fifth chapter of the *Guide*, and so they sent two monks to the place where Master Shantideva was living. They travelled to a stupa in the south of India called Pelyun Chen to invite him to come back to Nalandra. The master refused to come, but he did tell them that the people from central India were correct, and that the two books they sought could be found written in tiny letters hidden in the rafters of his old room at the monastery. He then gave these monks a complete explanation of the both the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* and the *Compendium of Trainings*.

Later Master Shantideva was wondering what he could do to help others, and so he decided to check with his clairvoyance. He saw in the east a great many people whose lives were disturbed by a terrible dispute and, seeing that he could help, set off in their direction. While he was there he acted as the opponent of the great argument maker

In-Depth Course II: Exploring the Border Between You and Me
A Brief Biography of Master Shantideva

who was causing all the trouble, and with his great powers he was able to bring everyone back together.

He then thought to himself, "What further could I do to benefit people?" The idea then came to him that he should travel to the kingdom of Magada in order to help the people living there who had fallen into the chasm of wrong views. When he arrived, he found a great many people who had extremely weird wrong views, and he decided to stay with them for some time. One day, due to his extraordinary power and to the purity of the prayers these people had made in their past lives, there occurred an enormous blizzard. The storm lasted for seven days, and the community ran out of food and drink. They began to go crazy, and decided that whoever was able to come up with something to eat and drink would become their leader. The bodhisattva Shantideva was miraculously able to fill a single alms bowl with rice, and from it fed everybody in the community. As their leader he was then able to demolish their wrong views, and lead them into the Buddha's teachings.

Master Shantideva next checked with his clairvoyance to see who else needed help. He saw many people suffering from a famine, in desperate need of help, and thousands about to die. He provided these people with sustenance, taught them the teachings of the Buddha, and thus brought them to happiness.

Then the great bodhisattva thought to himself, "What could I do to help the teachings of the Buddha?" He saw that if he were to assist a certain king it would aid many people. He journeyed to the crossroads near his palace, and began to assess the situation. He found a great crowd of mighty, but merciless people. There were a lot of them gathered already, and many others like them on their way. These people were aware of the king's great wealth, and this fact was causing the king much distress. He thought that if he were to use all of his wealth to pay off these people, then having obtained the kingdom would be of no point; but also that if he did not, then they would surely separate his mind from his body. Master Shantideva took a liking to the king, and arranged to be his bodyguard. Because he had limitless power and might, he was able to overpower all of the evil people, and put the king and his people at ease. During all this time Master Shantideva had no weapon other than a single wooden sword, a sword resembling the sword of Gentle Voice.

The whole kingdom began to develop great faith and respect for Master Shantideva, and made many offerings to him. But there was one man who was very jealous of him, and could not bear all of his success. He went to the king and told him that Master Shantideva was a devious man. He told the king that Shantideva had nothing more than a wooden sword, and that he would never be able to protect him if anything happened. He said to the king, "This man is deceiving you. Even his sword is nothing more than wood, and so he could never be able to guard your body"; and advised the king to investigate. The king became angered, went to Master Shantideva, and told him to take his sword out of its scabbard. The bodhisattva replied saying, "Your Highness will be hurt if I do so," but the king told him to do it anyway, whether it hurt him or not. Master Shantideva then said to him, "I agree then to take it out, but I advise Your Highness to cover one of your eyes. The king covered one eye as instructed, and when the great bodhisattva pulled out the sword, it blazed with such a light that the

In-Depth Course II: Exploring the Border Between You and Me
A Brief Biography of Master Shantideva

king's exposed eye was blinded. The King apologized, took refuge in Master Shantideva, and entered into the teachings of the Buddha.

After this Master Shantideva thought to himself, "What next can I do to be of help to others?" He checked with his clairvoyance, and saw there were many non-Buddhists who opposed the Teachings and needed to be subdued. He went to where they lived in the south, and dressed himself as a beggar. One day a servant of the King saw him and noticed that drops of water which touched his body instantly began to boil.

There was a non-Buddhist teacher living in this land who decided that he wanted to compete with a Buddhist in miraculous powers. He made a deal with the king that whoever lost this competition would have to convert to the other's religion, and that the winner could burn all of the monasteries and books of the loser's religion. The King could find no one of the Buddhist community who would agree to these conditions, and he grieved. Then the servant who had seen the miracle with Master Shantideva told him about it. The King sent out messengers to seek him, and to beg for his help in defeating the non-Buddhist teacher.

The bodhisattva Shantideva told them that he would be able to help, and that they should prepare a large bowl of water, two bolts of cloth, and a fire. On the day of the competition the whole kingdom gathered, and a throne was prepared for the King. The two opponents began their debates, and because of the power of Master Shantideva's reasoning and scriptural knowledge, his opponent was unable to even respond. Because of this he thought he'd try to win with his miraculous powers instead, and so he began to draw the secret world of a powerful Hindu god in the sky. But before he had finished drawing even its eastern side, the bodhisattva Shantideva went into a deep meditation on the element of wind and brought about a great storm which began to tear apart the entire area.

The King, Queen, and the others assembled ran for cover, and the non-Buddhist teacher and his secret world were thrown about in every direction, like sparrows caught in a hurricane. A great darkness descended upon all the land, and Master Shantideva sent rays of light out from a spot between his eyes to light the way for the King and the Queen. Their clothes had been ripped off and they were covered in dust, so the great bodhisattva bathed them in the water from the bowl, dressed them in the cloth, and put them near the fire, where they could warm themselves.

Master Shantideva's activities were exclusively dedicated to the benefit of living beings, and to helping the Buddha's teachings. Everything he did was meant to express the truth of the saying: "Men are like the mango fruit. Sometimes they look ripe on the outside, but are not ripe on the inside. Others are ripe on the inside, but don't look ripe on the outside. Some look and are ripe both inside and out, and others don't look ripe truly are not." For people like us who haven't seen emptiness directly, it is very difficult to judge another's mind. Generally speaking then we should never allow ourselves to think that anyone at all has any bad qualities, and we should realize more specifically that criticizing anyone who has entered the Buddha's teachings is like playing near a pit of embers concealed in ash. It is important that we not criticize other people, and to try to see all things as pure. It is to express this fact that Master Shantideva lived the way that he did.

In-Depth Course II: Exploring the Border Between You and Me
A Brief Biography of Master Shantideva

He also taught us by example many other lessons. Never be satisfied with wrong or partial paths. Train yourself in paths which are complete. Practice what is taught in this bodhisattva's books. If you take Gentle Voice as your personal Angel, you will be able to achieve all wonderful qualities. It isn't fitting to put any of faith in books which can't bring you to total enlightenment. The only entry point for those who wish for freedom is the teachings of Enlightened Beings. So if you wish to practice the teachings of the steps of the path to enlightenment, make supplication to this great bodhisattva; and learn about, contemplate, and meditate on his words.