



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

Answer Key, Class Four

1) At this point in the text, Master Shantideva repeats his teaching that the force of habit is so strong that, with practice, we can get good at anything. Why has he brought this point up?

[We are on the verge in the text where we go from the step of treating others and ourselves the same to the step of exchanging ourselves and others. The "other guy" in the book has said that the first step is so difficult that he doesn't see how he could achieve the second. Master Shantideva replies that practice makes perfect.]

2) Conceptually, the most important step in the entire exercise of working with the border between others and ourselves comes now in the text, where we try to move into another person's body. How does the switch from the first step of our practice (treating ourselves and others the same) to the second step (exchanging each other) happen?

[The "other guy" has been moaning about how difficult it is to treat himself and other people exactly the same. And so Master Shantideva presents an extraordinary suggestion: instead of trying to treat others the same as I treat myself, why not just *make others myself*? Then I can go on watching out for Number One, and automatically be taking care of everyone else too.]

3) Master Shantideva next says that we should "Come to understand that for myself it's wrong, but for all others it's an ocean of fine qualities." What is the "it" here?

[The "it" refers to our habit of cherishing ourselves. This is something very undesirable to do towards ourselves, but it is very desirable to do towards ourselves when we are everybody else too.]

4) At this point in the text, the "other guy" complains that there are just too many other people around for me to switch places with all of them: it would be just too much to keep his mind on. How does Master Shantideva counter this objection?

[Master Shantideva replies that we should reflect on the great number of parts to our body: arms, legs, toes, fingers, every single organ inside. And yet we manage to think of them all as one unit—"me"—and we manage to take care of each one of them individually, watching out that they get what they want and are protected from problems. This proves that we have the capacity to do this with large numbers of other people.]

5) Master Shantideva then says that we do manage to think of our bodies as ourselves, even though they are not ourselves. Aren't they ourselves?

[I am me, and my body is me. What Master Shantideva is saying here is that I am not myself in the way I always thought. The "me" that I always thought that I was doesn't exist at all. This is because it is a "me" which comes from its own side, and is not an artificial creation of my own mind. The way my mind creates this "me" is that I perceive different parts of me, and then I project a "me" onto them. Exactly what kind of "me" I project onto myself is determined by the seeds already present in my mind. Exactly what seeds I have is determined by whether or not I have taken care of others.]

6) Master Shantideva says that, once we have exchanged ourselves with others, then we can work for others and not have any feelings of pride or self-importance. Explain why this is true.

[Since we have already exchanged ourselves and others, then now when we work for others we are actually working for ourselves, and so there is no reason to feel that other people would be amazed or impressed by what we do.]

7) Once we have exchanged ourselves and others, we can also avoid any desire for a future karmic result only for ourselves, from helping others. Quote the half a verse with which this point is made. (Sanskrit and Tibetan tracks in those languages also.)

[The relevant half of a verse is:

**You don't expect congratulations
From yourself whenever you eat
Your dinner for yourself.**

**{BDAG NYID KYIS NI ZAS ZOS NAS,
,LAN LA RE BA MI 'BYUNG BZHIN,}**

{àtmànau bhojayitvaiva phalà÷à na ca jàyate}

8) At this point in the text, Master Shantideva mentions the fact that the enlightened being named Loving Eyes (Avalokiteshvara, or Chenresik in Tibetan) has instructed his followers that—if they are ever in even the slightest trouble—then they can call on his name, and it will help them. How does this relate to the subject we're covering?

[The point is that a very high, enlightened being has taken the trouble to provide a practice to us which we can use even when we are the least bit troubled or sad. In the verse before this, Master Shantideva has said that we should learn to protect all other beings from even the slightest unkind word, *because this usually how we watch out for ourselves*: we take great pains to avoid even the slightest problem that would affect us, and tend to ignore even great needs that others have. The point is that we should exchange this concern—have it instead for other people—just the way that Loving Eyes has obviously exchanged it already.]