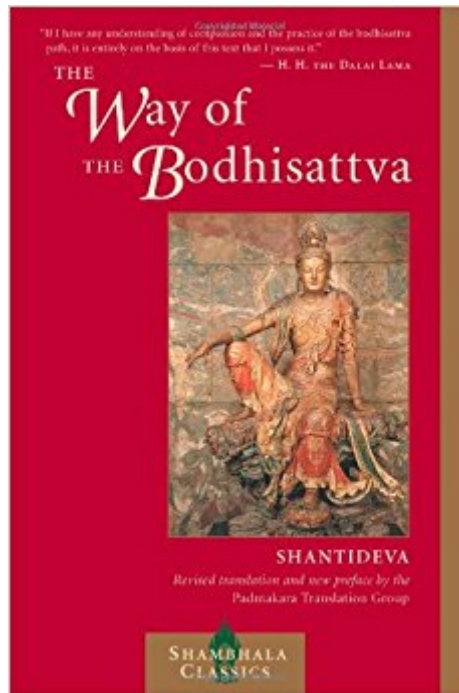


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The Way Of The Bodhisattva: (Bodhicaryavatara), Revised Edition (Shambhala Classics)



Synopsis

Treasured by Buddhists of all traditions, *The Way of the Bodhisattva* (Bodhicharyavatara) is a guide to cultivating the mind of enlightenment, and to generating the qualities of love, compassion, generosity, and patience. This text has been studied, practiced, and expounded upon in an unbroken tradition for centuries, first in India, and later in Tibet. Presented in the form of a personal meditation in verse, it outlines the path of the Bodhisattvas—those who renounce the peace of individual enlightenment and vow to work for the liberation of all beings and to attain buddhahood for their sake. This version, translated from the Tibetan, is a revision by the translators of the 1997 edition. Included are a foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, a new translator's preface, a thorough introduction, a note on the translation, and three appendices of commentary by the Nyingma master Kunzang Pelden.

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Customer Reviews

Shantideva provides here the perfect foundation for all Bodhisattvas in training..any individual who wants to integrate spiritual wisdom into all aspects of life.This text is the kind of inspired writing that one benefits in reading and re-reading over the course of one's life in order to glean more insight into the means by which one may live according to the Way of the Dharma and attain liberation for the benefit of others.I have been to teachings led by HH Dalai Lama and two of the chapters in this book were used as a means to receive formal Buddhist initiation.In addition, His Holiness reads from this text daily and considers His "Mission Statement" to be this verse from Shantideva's text:

"For as long as space endures and for as long as living beings remain, until then may I too abide to dispel the misery of the world." Truly powerful in its simplicity. This text is a must for anyone who truly aspires to be a practicing Buddhist or for any spiritual warrior from any tradition.

Shatideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life is a very practical guide for those seeking to actualize the six perfections of Buddhism. It is a book that will reward your study over and over again, and is meant to be read and studied more than once. I have read three different translations of this work. The Shambala edition is the most poetic of the three and what it gains in poetry it slightly loses in meaning. My first choice is the version published by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. That is not to slight the Shambala edition though, for it merely presents another view of an immense landscape. If you have any interest in Buddhism and have some background in basic Buddhist ideas, read this book, and try your best to put it into practice.

The ultimate review of this book is on the cover: a quote from H. H. the Dalai Lama - "If I have any understanding of compassion and the practice of the bodhisattva path, it is entirely on the basis of this text that I possess it." This review, therefore, addresses why this new translation is so valuable. Part of the answer is the poetic quality of the translation. A useful translation renders the meaning of a linguistic work of art into another language. This translation is a re-creation of poetry in the fullest sense. The majesty of the verse appears to be an example of a well-crafted original in English. The work would be evocative even without footnotes to give context and perspective. A sensitive awareness to contextual meaning, however, is the other great strength of this translation. In an extensive and clearly reasoned introduction, the translator (Wulstan Fletcher) discusses the rationale for a process that relied primarily on translation from the Tibetan version of this book, despite the existence of the original Sanskrit by Shatideva. Why a translation of a translation, when the original is extant? The translator's answer is the invaluable contextual insight of the unbroken oral tradition of this work within Tibet. And, he has retained the option to consult the Sanskrit original for patterns of style and to resolve any ambiguity in the Tibetan version. The biography of Shantideva as an appendix also helps to enrich the understanding of this work in our "modern" age. In a time of frantic life-styles and limited attention to compassion as a core value, a poetic reminder of an attitude of service can enrich our lives. This translation of The Way of the Bodhisattva is an evocative path to such an understanding: our true value as ethically motivated interdependent human beings.

In addition to the translated text of Shantideva's brilliant 10 chapter treatise on the what, why and how to live the life of a Bodhisattva, the 28-page introduction is one of the most concise and engaging explanations of what the practice and study of Buddhism entails--with all its challenges and rewards--using the teaching we are about to read as its reference point. This text has many versions of translations, and I found this one by the Padmakara Translation Group to be very good at keeping the meter of Shantideva's beautiful poetic delivery--reportedly given spontaneously in one teaching session--without losing the profound meaning of his message. For those looking for something written in the style of the Book of Psalms, but with a purely Buddhist point of view, this is it.

The Bodhicaryavatara is a manual for the practice of compassion. It regards compassion, the foremost quality of a bodhisattva, as beneficial for both the recipient and the giver. By unselfishly aiding others, the giver not only improves the lives of others but his action helps him eliminate his own miseries. No doubt that it is hard to extend love in our society, but Shantideva anticipates the practitioner's reservations by providing several exercises that alleviate the dread of exploitation by others. The Bodhicaryavatara remains an important text, and although it was written by a Buddhist monk its message extends to people of all faiths.

The Padmakara Translation Group attempted to use a poetic style in this translation. They would have been better off to have stayed with prose. The style and language is sometimes distracting and forced, and it makes one wonder how close the translation is to the meanings in the source documents.

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