

Dharma Path Study Format for Dzogchen Dharma Centers

Studying the Bodhisattvacaryavatara

Following a request to Dzogchen Khenpo Choga Rinpoche that the Eugene sangha begin a study session on a selected text, Khenpo suggested that we should study the Bodhisattvacaryavatara (BCA). We are most fortunate to have a teacher who is a world expert on this text. Again, we are most fortunate that through the work of Andreas Kretschmar and others, and Khenpo's own commentary, there is a wealth of materials freely available in English for this text.

Khenpo's own words regarding this text are:

By studying a treatise such as the Bodhisattva-caryāvatāra one can reach a level of knowledge about the dharma that will remedy blind faith. A practitioner of the dharma should eventually gain the faith of conviction, an unshakeable certainty in the dharma. A Buddhist practitioner should know what Buddha, Dharma and Sangha really are.

Such a practitioner should really understand how to practice bodhicitta and the six transcendental perfections. Intellectual understanding of the teachings must lead to direct experience of the teachings. Finally, the experience must lead to the realization of the teachings. As one reads, studies and practices the dharma more, one's wrong views, misunderstandings and doubts should to that extent be dispelled, and certainty about the dharma should dawn in one's mind.

The required materials are available for free download online. Please visit the Dharma Path pages of the Dzogchen Lineage website for more information.

Class Format

Meeting place:

Meeting time:

Study materials: The above-mentioned materials

Class structure:

Preparation for each class:

1. memorization of English BCA stanza to be discussed
2. reading of two commentaries relating to that stanza
3. preparation of question and answer according to list in file
 "Dharma Path Discussion Points" to be found among the study materials referenced above.

Suggested in class format:

1. All present do "preliminary practice" from The Buddha Path
2. All present do "learning practice" from The Buddha Path
3. At section of "learning practice" where teaching starts, students start specific Dharma Path study exercises as follows:

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1. The whole class reads out loud and together the entire current chapter from from the BCA English verse translation by Andreas Kretschmar for that chapter.

(for example, we would read Ch.1, all 31 stanzas of it, in its entirety for each of the 31 meetings we had regarding this chapter.)

Materials for this section are available among the files:
"BCA English Verse Translation" Dharma Path materials.

2. The whole class reads 3 times each the transliterated Sanskrit version, the transliterated Tibetan version and the translated English version of each verse stanza.

Materials for this study are available in the "**BCA Individual Stanza**" Dharma Path materials.

3. Each class member recites alone memorized English version of the stanza under discussion for that week.
4. The class discusses the stanza and its commentaries according to discussion points 1-10 listed in the file:

"Dharma Path Study Questions"

by going through these points one by one, and with each student giving his or her answer to that point. Students should take turns "going first" in answering the discussion points.

5. Notes are made of any questions we would like to ask Khenpo coming out of each class. questions area compiled and we ask Khenpo at earliest convenient time. address any replies to previous questions Khenpo has answered since last class.
6. Preview reading assignment and materials for next class.

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4. Complete the "Learning Practice" section from The Buddha Path.
5. Do the "Concluding Practice" section from The Buddha Path.

End