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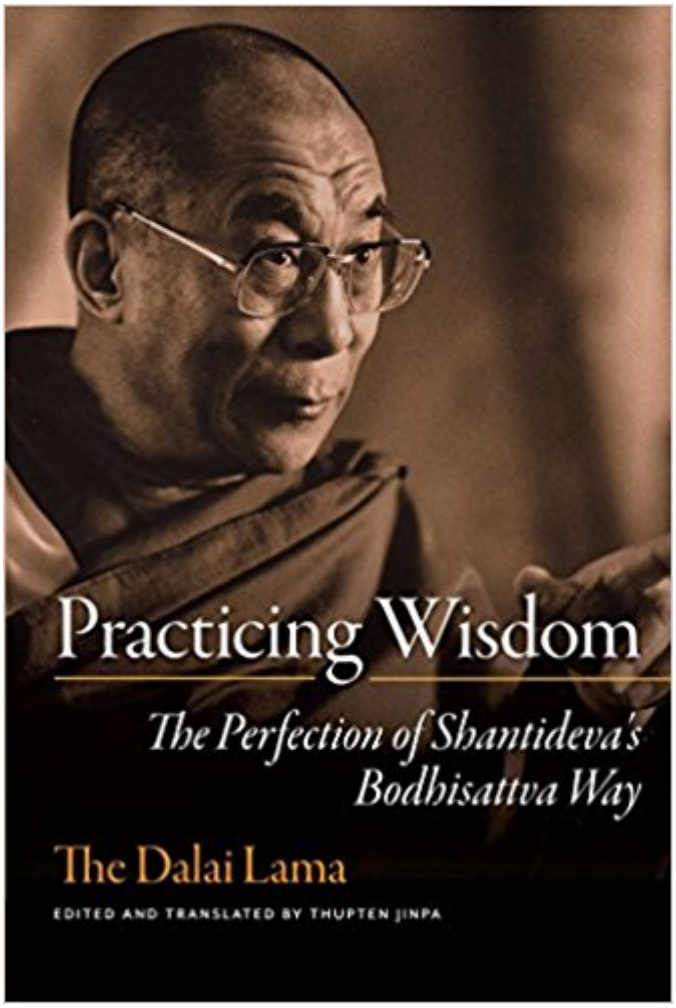
Practicing Wisdom: The Perfection Of Shantideva's Bodhisattva Way



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Synopsis

Like the bestselling A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of the Night, Practicing Wisdom focuses on Shantideva's Way of the Bodhisattva. While the former includes only a brief introduction to Shantideva's complex and crucial ninth chapter on insight, Practicing Wisdom is a full and detailed follow-up commentary, making it an invaluable statement on the fundamental concept behind Buddhist thought and practice. Shantideva says at the beginning of the final chapter of his Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life: "All branches of the Buddha's teachings are taught for the sake of wisdom. If you wish to bring an end to suffering, you must develop wisdom." Shantideva's ninth chapter is revered in Tibetan Buddhist circles as one of the most authoritative expositions of the Buddha's core insight, and all other Buddhist practices are means to support the generation of this wisdom within the practitioner. In Practicing Wisdom, the Dalai Lama reaffirms his reputation as a great scholar, communicator, and embodiment of the Buddha's Way by illuminating Shantideva's verses, drawing on contrasting commentaries from the Nyingma and Gelug lineages, and leading the reader through the stages of insight up to the highest view of emptiness. These teachings, delivered in southern France in 1993, have been masterfully translated, edited, and annotated by Geshe Thupten Jinpa, the Dalai Lama's primary translator and founder of the Institute of Tibetan Classics.

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Customer Reviews

A Shambhala Sun Best Buddhist Writing selection. (Shambhala Sun)

Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, is the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. He frequently describes himself as a simple Buddhist monk. Born in northeastern Tibet in 1935, he was as a toddler recognized as the incarnation of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and brought to Tibet's capital, Lhasa. In 1950, Mao Zedong's Communist forces made their first incursions into eastern Tibet, shortly after which the young Dalai Lama assumed the political leadership of his country. He passed his scholastic examinations with honors at the Great Prayer Festival in Lhasa in 1959, the same year Chinese forces occupied the city, forcing His Holiness to escape to India. There he set up the Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamsala, working to secure the welfare of the more than 100,000 Tibetan exiles and prevent the destruction of Tibetan culture. In his capacity as a spiritual and political leader, he has traveled to more than sixty-two countries on six continents and met with presidents, popes, and leading scientists to foster dialogue and create a better world. In recognition of his tireless work for the nonviolent liberation of Tibet, the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. In 2012, he relinquished political authority in his exile government and turned it over to democratically elected representatives. His Holiness frequently states that his life is guided by three major commitments: the promotion of basic human values or secular ethics in the interest of human happiness, the fostering of interreligious harmony, and securing the welfare of the Tibetan people, focusing on the survival of their identity, culture, and religion. As a superior scholar trained in the classical texts of the Nalanda tradition of Indian Buddhism, he is able to distill the central tenets of Buddhist philosophy in clear and inspiring language, his gift for pedagogy imbued with his infectious joy. Connecting scientists with Buddhist scholars, he helps unite contemplative and modern modes of investigation, bringing ancient tools and insights to bear on the acute problems facing the contemporary world. His efforts to foster dialogue among leaders of the world's faiths envision a future where people of different beliefs can share the planet in harmony. Wisdom Publications is proud to be the premier publisher of the Dalai Lama's more serious and in-depth works. Thupten Jinpa Langri was educated in the classical Tibetan monastic academia and received the highest academic degree of Geshe Lharam (equivalent to a doctorate in divinity). Jinpa also holds a BA in philosophy and a PhD in religious studies, both from the University of Cambridge, England. Since 1985, he has been the principal translator to the Dalai Lama, accompanying him to the United States, Canada, and Europe. He has translated and edited many books by the Dalai Lama, including The World of Tibetan Buddhism, Essence of the Heart Sutra, and the New York Times bestseller Ethics for the New Millennium. Jinpa has published scholarly articles on various aspects of Tibetan culture, Buddhism, and philosophy, and books such as Songs of Spiritual

Experience: Tibetan Poems of Awakening and Insight (co-authored) and Self, Reality and Reason in Tibetan Thought. He serves on the advisory board of numerous educational and cultural organizations in North America, Europe, and India. He is currently the president and the editor-in-chief of the Institute of Tibetan Classics, a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to translating key Tibetan classics into contemporary languages. He also currently chairs the Mind and Life Institute.

I've been working through "The Way of the Bodhisattva" (Padmakara Translation) for many months using Pema Chodron's "No Time To Lose" as a study guide. She said the 9th chapter on Wisdom deserves a full book so she didn't address it in her book. I bought "Practicing Wisdom" to continue this process. I'm barely getting going with His Holiness's book but it is exceptional. It has more depth than some I've read by him. Those are meant to be more easily accessible I presume. ("Transforming the Mind" is one exception which I know of.) In the first chapter of P.W. His Holiness addresses some Buddhist basics. This is material with which I have a fair amount of familiarity. Still I have highlighted and gone through this chapter at least 3 times getting deeper insight each time. As I progress I am continually challenged to receive the material both mentally and through skillful means. I will be working with this book for many months and I'm certain it will be excellent guidance for me. (perhaps more to come later)

This is a precious book to advanced students and practitioners of Buddhism. This is THE BOOK.Although the book is about the ninth chapter of Shantideva's Ã¢Â ÂœThe Way of BohisattvaÃ¢Â Â•, His Holiness presents distinct aspects of the essence of Buddhism: emptiness and dependent origination.The reader needs to understand all paragraphs. So, a complete understanding of the book will take time. In my case, after a third reading, the book started to be clear.When you understand clearly the Two Truths, you will see the power of Buddhism; you will deeply comprehend that you need to change.Other Dalai LamaÃ¢Â Â™s books will be useful for the comprehension of Ã¢Â ÂœPracticing WisdomÃ¢Â Â•. I suggest the reading of "For The Benefit of All Beings", "Healing Anger", Ã¢Â ÂœThe middle WayÃ¢Â Â•, Ã¢Â ÂœStages of MeditationÃ¢Â Â•, Ã¢Â ÂœHow to PracticeÃ¢Â Â•, "Advice on Dying" and "Essence of the Heart Sutra". The most important Buddhist practice is The Great Perfection; you can read about this practice in "Dzogchen", "Mind in Confort and Ease" and "The Heart of MeditationÃ¢Â Â•.In my opinion, if you understand these books, you will have a deep idea of Buddhism. It is important to say that the above mentioned books are not for beginners although they also contain basic concepts.

Just having a deep comprehension of Buddhism is not enough. Realization of emptiness -- through meditation practices -- is the Buddhist target to be attained.If you really understand Buddhism, you will be convinced that the Dharma is technology. In fact, Physics is a third-person science and Buddhism can be viewed as a first-person science; both are based upon experiments, external and internal, respectively. So, the Dharma is technology if it is accepted as consequence of first-person science. From this perspective, the knowledge offered by Buddhism can be considered the most useful by Westerners since it is able to remove suffering, the deepest existential human difficulty.The Dalai LamaÃ¢Â Â™s speeches in the West are adaptations of Buddhism to Westerners. The Dalai LamaÃ¢Â Â™s books, above mentioned, intend to show to Westerners that Buddhism can be considered a first-person science; this is the reason, in my opinion, why the Dalai Lama is a Nobel prize laureate.

The books by the Dalai Lama seem to be of two kinds; those meant for the initiate or the curious to pick up some understanding of basic Buddhist teachings and those meant for the serious practitioner of Buddhism and spirituality. This book is certainly in the latter catagory. It is a book that can be used as a study guide for the renouned Chapter Nine of Shantideva's "The Way of the Bodhisattva." Certainly own this book as a companion book. Many Buddhist organizations have used Shantideva's book as a study text, as we did at the Sarasota Mindfulness Meditation Center, the first eight chapters serving as preface for the profundity of Chapter Nine. The Dalai Lama's book provides a reliable foundational study guide to the original text. It's surprising there aren't dozens if not hundreds of reviews of this book. A previous reviewer is certainly correct that it "is MUST for any serious Buddhist student." It should be digested in small bites following the advice to hear, reflect and meditate on each of the bites.

This book is truly remarkable, even among the excellent books written by His Holiness. It is a transcript of teachings he gave in the early 90s on the 9th chapter of Shantideva's classic "Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life" (Bodhisattvacaryavatara). The 9th chapter is a very difficult chapter to read, because it deals with the understanding of ultimate reality according to the Madhyamika (Middle Way) tradition. However, this is a most important topic, since liberation can only come from realization of emptiness. Therefore, commentaries are essential.His Holiness already published some of his talks on the 9th chapter as a small yellow book called "Transcendent Wisdom". This current book is perhaps much better for a general audience, though, because it is so clearly written and ably translated by Geshe Thubten Jinpa. It is so clear, that even difficult subjects appear

comprehensible. Also, each chapter ends with a brief meditation on the preceding topic. That really helps one to ground one's knowledge and achieve insights.I have already recommended this book to several other people, and have heard very positive responses. If you are interested in this topic, or Shantideva's text, this book is a very good choice.By the way, the translation of choice for Shantideva's book is the one by the Padmakara translation group, published by Shambhala. That is the one used in this book. However, even if you haven't read Shantideva's work, or don't have it, the full text of chapter 9 is given here, and therefore this book can stand alone as well.

Absolutely splendid for advanced practice of the dharma, especially students of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy/religion who have lots of experience with meditation based on compassion/wisdom.

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