



The Asian Classics Institute



Diamond Mountain University

In-Depth Course 1
Teachings of the Future Buddha

Homework and Quiz Master, Class One: *About the Text*
(Quiz questions are marked with an asterisk.)

1) In this course, we will study the fifth of the five books of Maitreya, the coming Buddha. Name this book in English and Sanskrit; then give a short explanation of the name. (Sanskrit & Tibetan tracks spell out in these languages.)

The name of the book in English is “Commentary on the Latter Part of the Series, in the Greater Way.” In Sanskrit this is “Mahayana Uttara Tantra Shastra,” or “Uttara Tantra” for short. The “series” here refers to the three progressive turnings of the wheel of the Dharma by Lord Buddha. The “latter part” of the series refers to the second and third turnings of the wheel, which are devoted to the beliefs of the two great schools of the mahayana, or greater way: the Middle-Way and Mind-Only Schools, respectively. The book is a commentary which explains the primary difference between these two schools, which is how they present the idea of emptiness.

महायानोत्तरतन्त्रशास्त्र

maha-ya-nottaratantrasha-stra

ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོ་རྒྱུད་སྒྲ་མའི་བསྟན་བཅོས།

thekpa chenpo gyu lamay tenchu

*2) Arya Asanga was granted this fifth book from the coming Buddha, Maitreya, when he visited Maitreya’s paradise. How does the story of how he came to make this visit summarize really the three crucial ideas of worldview?

Arya Asanga meditated in a cave for 12 years, in order to see and learn from Maitreya, but he was completely unable to do so. He then gave up and left the cave. On the way to the nearest town, he found a wounded dog, and made selfless efforts to save the animal—thus gaining compassion (the first great idea). This and his twelve years of effort created the karma (which is the second great idea) to see the dog as Maitreya. This was only possible because both the dog and Maitreya were empty of being any particular way from their own side (which is the third great idea).

3) We will use two great explanations of this book during the course. Give their names, authors, and dates of the authors. (S,T)

(1) The “Complete Explanation of the Commentary on the Latter Part,” written by Arya Asanga himself (350 AD)

उत्तरतन्त्रव्याख्या	आर्य असंग
uttaratantravya-khya-	a-rya asan.ga

རྒྱུད་སྒྲ་མའི་རྣམ་པར་བཤད་པ།	འཕགས་པ་ཐོགས་མེད།
gyu lamay nampar shepa	pakpa tokme

(2) “A Treatise on the Commentary on the Latter Part,” written by Gyaltsab Je (1364-1432)

རྒྱུད་སྒྲ་ལྡི་ཀ།	རྒྱལ་ཚབ་ཇེ།
gyu latik	gyaltsab je

*4) Arya Asanga’s coming into the world was predicted by Lord Buddha himself, in the *Root Tantra of Gentle Voice, Manjushri*. How does this prediction relate to the fact that the five books of Maitreya may seem to contradict each other?

In the prediction, Lord Buddha says that Arya Asanga “will, in many different ways, distinguish between the literal and figurative meanings of the sutras.” Distinguishing between what the Buddha said and what the Buddha meant is perhaps one of Arya Asanga’s most important tasks, since the first three of the five books of Maitreya describe emptiness according to the Mind-Only School, while the latter two explain in according to the Middle-Way School—and thus seem to be in contradiction.

5) After returning from Lord Maitreya’s paradise, Arya Asanga spread the Dharma widely. At one point he was tested by a king, who mentally asked him six questions about the sutras on the perfection of wisdom. Three of these questions related to the meaning of the sutras, rather than their wording. The first of these three is particularly important; explain it briefly.

In the first of the three questions about the meaning of the sutras on the perfection of wisdom, the king mentally asks Arya Asanga whether foundation or storehouse consciousness, the place where the mental seeds of our past deeds are planted, exists in a substantial way. That is to say, it is easy to understand that all the objects projected by our mind as these seeds ripen are therefore, in a way, less than real or substantial. But what about the “projector” or storehouse consciousness itself? It would seem that it at least should exist in and of itself. But, as Arya Asanga notes, it does not.

*6) According to tradition, what levels had Arya Nagarjuna, Arya Asanga, and Maitreya reached during their lifetimes?

Arya Nagarjuna is said to have reached the first bodhisattva level, achieving the wish for enlightenment (bodhicitta), and the direct perception of emptiness. Arya Asanga is said to have reached the third bodhisattva level, and Maitreya the tenth.

Meditation assignment: 15 minutes per day, analytical meditation on each of the six questions of the king.

Debate assignment: Some time before the next class, discuss this class with one or more friends.