

11. The Bodhisattva's Altruistic Ideal: Selected Key Texts

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One of the most revolutionary aspects of Mahayana Buddhism is what many contemporary writers on Buddhism call "the bodhisattva ideal." This refers to an entire system of spiritual outlook and way of life that is dedicated to the pursuit of fulfilling the altruistic aspirations of the bodhisattva's undifferentiated compassion towards all sentient beings. In the classical Indian literature, in addition to key Mahayana sutras attributed to the Buddha, the following texts stood out as the most important authorities on this ideal: Nagarjuna's (circa second century) *Precious Garland*, Asanga's (fourth century) *Levels of the Bodhisattva*, Candragomin's (circa seventh century) *Twenty Stanzas on the Vow*, Shantideva's (circa seventh century) *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* and his *Compendium of Trainings*. In this composite volume of THE LIBRARY OF TIBETAN CLASSICS series we present authoritative Tibetan commentaries on two of the principal Indian Buddhist classics. First is Ngülchu Thokme Sangpo's (fourteenth century) lucid exposition of Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* and the second is Gyaltsap Dharma Rinchen's (1364-1432) succinct commentary on Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*. In addition, the volume contains following critical works: (i) a concise summary of the essential points of *Compendium of Trainings* by Tsongkhapa, (ii) an interwoven summary of the key themes of *Asanga's Bodhisattva Levels* and *Maitreya's Ornament of Mahayana Sutras* by Thuken Chökyi Nyima, (iii) a short training of mind for those aspiring for the awakening mind by Chenga Lodrö Gyaltzen, (iv) an overview of the bodhisattva precepts by Changkya Rölpai Dorje, and (v) a succinct presentation of the bodhisattva vows by Dza Paltrül Rinpoché.