

How to Live the
Compassionate Life:
*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland* by Lama Atisha

Shantideva Center

Session 1 - May 20, 2025



Introduction

- The author
- The context of these teachings
- The text



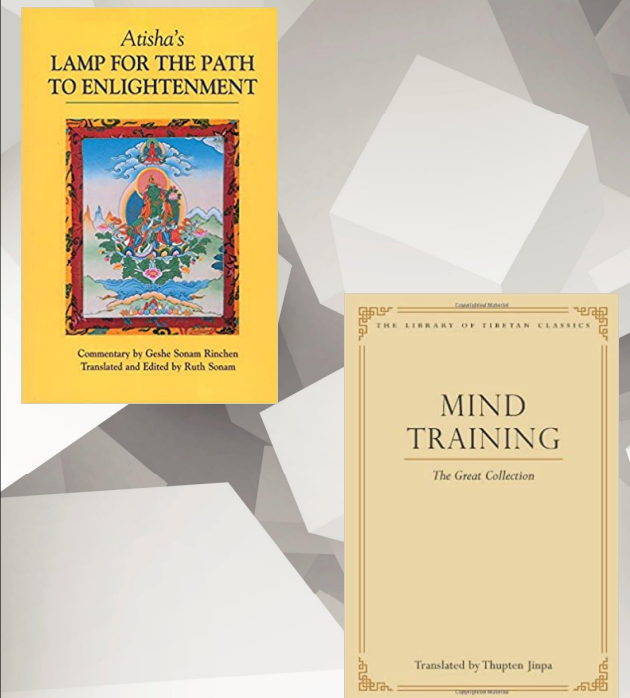
Introduction

- The author
- ◊ Atisha Dipamkara-shrijnana
- ◊ Dates: 982-1054 CE



Introduction

- The author
- ◊ Founder of the Kadam tradition with his heart disciple, Dromtönpa and their followers



Introduction

- The context of these teachings
 - ◊ The *lamrim*
 - ◊ *Lojong* (mind training)

On *Lojong* (mind training)



blo : mind *sbyong* : training

On *Lojong* (mind training)

◈ *blo* : mind, awareness, consciousness, thoughts, attitudes

◈ *sbyong* : there are several interrelated but distinct meanings:

This and the next slide are adapted from *Essential Mind Training*,
translated and introduced by Thupten Jinpa, p.4

On *Lojong* (mind training)

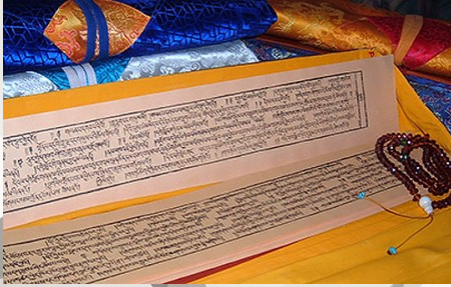
- **training** whereby one acquires a skill or masters a field of knowledge;
- **habituation** or familiarization with specific ways of being and thinking;
- **cultivating** specific mental qualities, such as universal compassion or the awakening mind; and
- **cleansing** or purifying, as in purifying one's mind of craving, hatred, and delusion.

On *Lojong* (mind training)

- ◈ All of the Buddha's teachings are "mind training" in a general sense, but the use of this term refers more specifically to a lineage of extraordinary teachings that are designed to help us to use whatever we meet to awaken fully.

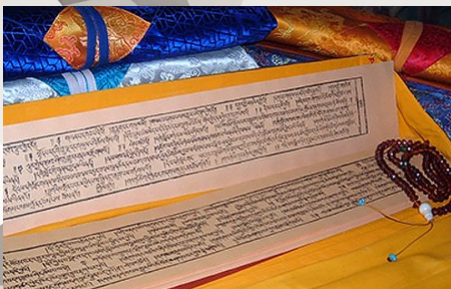
On *Lojong* (mind training)

- ◈ The genre of Buddhist literature called *mind training* or *lojong* encompasses specific approaches for cultivating bodhichitta – the altruistic aspiration to seek full awakening for the benefit of all beings.



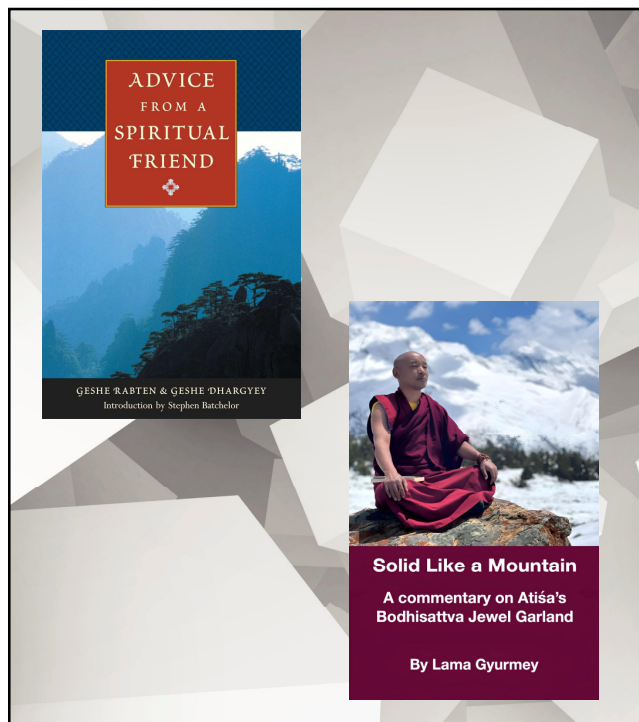
Introduction

- The text
 - ◊ Mainly sutra with some references to tantra
 - ◊ 26 verses which are like a string of precious jewels



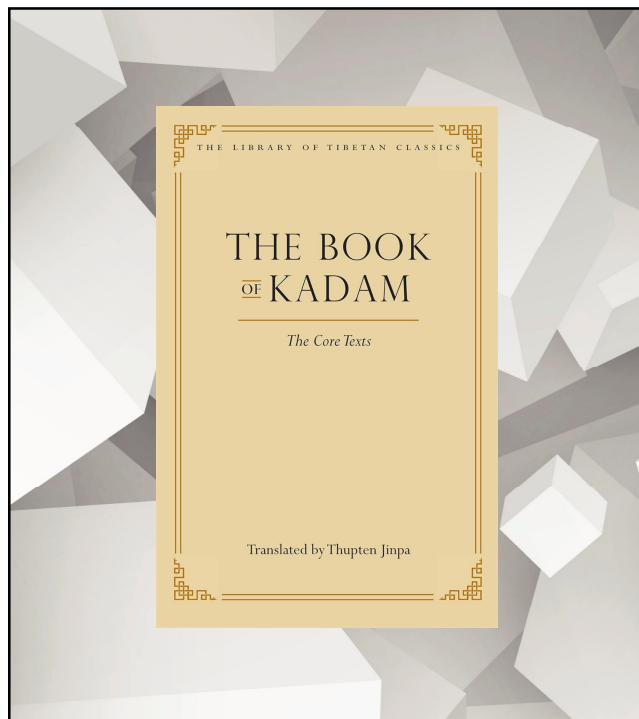
Introduction

- The text
 - ◊ Using Thupten Jinpa's translation
 - ◊ The order of the verses modified slightly per James B. Apple's version



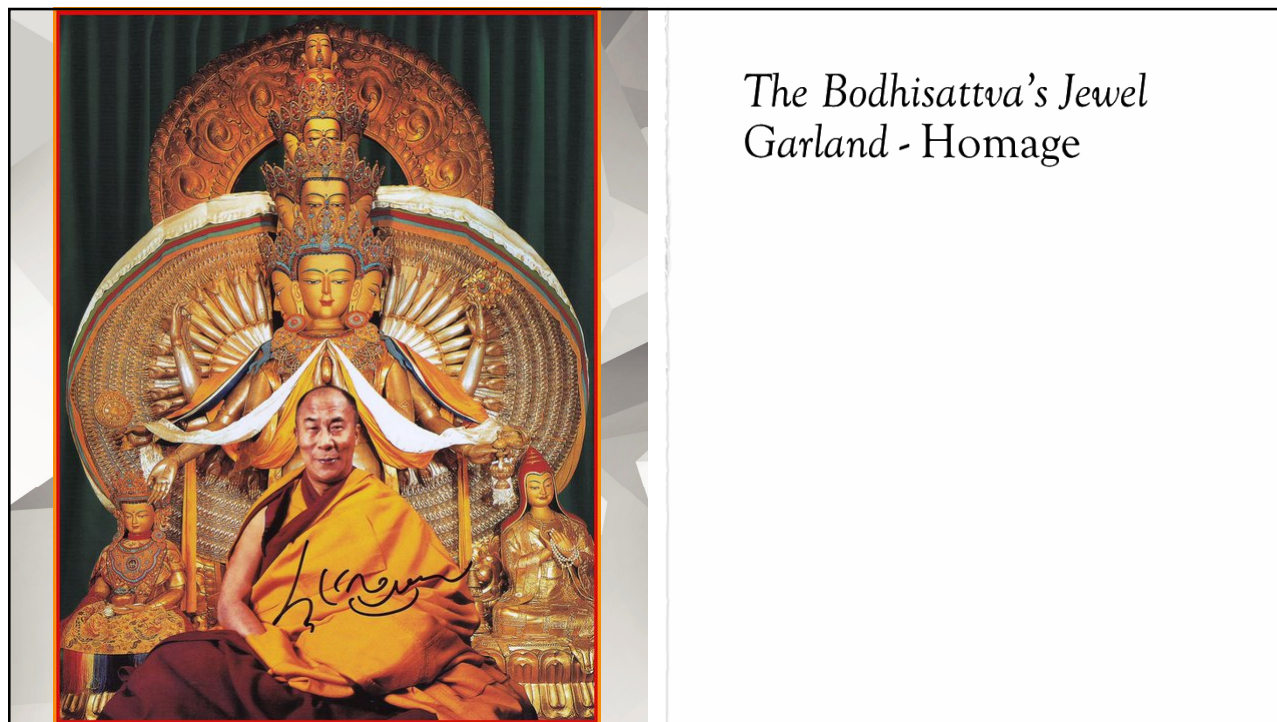
Introduction

- The text
 - ◊ Two published contemporary commentaries:
 - *Advice from a Spiritual Friend*
 - *Solid Like a Mountain*



Introduction

- The text
 - ◊ There is also a translation of *The Jewel Garland Dialogues* by Thupten Jinpa in *The Book of Kadam*



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland - Homage*

On the Homage

Atisha also adds, **I make prostration to the Buddha-figures** [or “faith divinities”]. This is referring specifically to Avalokiteshvara, or in Tibetan “Chenrezig,” who is the embodiment of compassion on the enlightened level, the full compassion of a Buddha.

From Oral Commentary by Alex Berzin

On the Homage

It's quite significant that Atisha mentions the gurus first, before the Buddha-figures (*yidams*). He does so because, as is always said, it's through the teachers that one is able to have contact with these Buddha-figures.

From Oral Commentary by Alex Berzin



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Verse 1ab*

On How to Develop Bodhichitta*

1. The Seven-Point Cause-and-Effect Technique
2. The Instruction on Equalizing and Exchanging Self with Others
3. The Eleven-Step Combined Method

* See handout “Techniques to Generate Bodhichitta”

On Verse 1ab

*“Oh, but how could I become enlightened?”
Don’t excuse yourself with such despondency!
The Buddha, who declares the truth,
Has truly spoken and proclaimed.*

- Verse 7.17, *The Way of the Bodhisattva* by Shantideva
Translated by Padmakara Translation Group

On Verse 1ab

*That if they bring forth strength of perseverance,
Even bees and flies
And gnats and grubs will gain
Supreme enlightenment so hard to find.*

- Verse 7.18, *The Way of the Bodhisattva* by Shantideva
Translated by Padmakara Translation Group

On Verse 1ab

*And if, by birth and lineage of human kind,
I'm able to distinguish good from ill
And do not leave aside the Bodhisattva deeds,
Why should I not attain the state of Buddhahood?*

- Verse 7.19, *The Way of the Bodhisattva* by Shantideva
Translated by Padmakara Translation Group



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Verse 1cd*

On Verse 1cd

As Je Tsongkhapa has said, “Wear the protective armor of enthusiastic perseverance and increase it like the waxing moon.”

Also, Chandrakirti said, “All profound and superficial goals follow from enthusiastic perseverance; with it anything can be accomplished.”

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.105



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Verse 2*

On Verse 2

*Those who wish to keep the trainings
Must with perfect selfpossession guard their minds.
Without this guard upon the mind,
The trainings cannot be preserved.*

- Verse 5.1, *The Way of the Bodhisattva* by Shantideva
Translated by Padmakara Translation Group



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Verse 3*

On Verse 3ab

Dromtonpa, Atisha's closest Tibetan disciple, said "If you can see your own faults, and never look for those of others, then even though you may have no other good qualities, you are very wise."

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.107

On Verse 3c

Je Tsongkhapa has said “Your own attainments and insight should be like a butter lamp burning inside a vase: it illuminates the interior but is not displayed outwardly.”

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.107

On Verse 3d

“**Talk of other’s good qualities**” means you must be genuine when acknowledging others. If someone truly has good qualities, acknowledge them. But don't fabricate virtues just because they're a friend, family member, or sponsor. Saying someone is nice just because they've helped you isn't a valid reason, and that doesn't make them a good person.

- *Solid Like a Mountain* by Lama Gyurmey, p.53

On Verse 3d

Many drug dealers and killers are good to their own families, but that doesn't make them good people. To genuinely recognize someone's goodness, observe whether they help not only you but others as well. Don't invent qualities that don't exist. Making up positive traits in someone is dishonest.

- *Solid Like a Mountain* by Lama Gyurmey, p.53