

The Middle Lam Rim Session 1

I appreciate that each and everyone of you appreciate the teachings on Lam Rim which in fact is the heart of knowledge to be acquired by those who truly wish to actualise the spiritual purpose of enlightenment . Even though there are so many categories of philosophical schools of dharma , so many yantras , so many different ways of presentation of the dharma out there , but they want something like Lam Rim not to be missed if we truly wish to achieve the blessings , the knowledge , the practise of the whole Path that is Lam Rim.

There are certain teachings that very much touch on the preliminary teachings only , certain teaching touch on the resultant aspect of the path even though it is profound dharma like tantra and certain teaching , certain specific topics whenever you get a chance to have a dharma discourse like Lam Rim there you get everything and its the right vessel.

Whatever level of intelligence or merits or interests or objective of your spiritual goal or whether you are aspiring just a happy meaning life or aspiring relations or aspiring full enlightenment for the full benefit of all sentient beings or Buddha hood for the benefit of all sentient beings that courage that you don't mind if it takes numberless countless eons of time or you wish to achieve enlightenment within this very cushion on this very moment.

So when you come in contact with Lam Rim , each and everyone's interest can be fulfilled, you will get all the tools whichever way you aspire for your spiritual goal therefore Lam Rim teachings is most suitable for the advance practitioners , tantric practitioners, Mahayana sutra practitioners , Hinayana practitioners , those of you who just want to have a meaningful happy life. Lam Rim is the , i cant remember the name of the chocolate in Switzerland the one that it just melts in your mouth, the blissful kind like transmit through entire of your system. It was really good, truly fulfilling, so the Lam Rim teaching is like that..truly fulfilling.

So now there are many ways to introduce Lam Rim teachings or any teachings especially the commentary or root text in verses like Lam Rim text, it can be introduce by the extensive explanatory commentary and that also can done by explaining the meaning of each word, meaning of each line, verse, chapter, meaning of the whole text in extensive as well as the summary as well as details explanation can be done like that.

And there are teachings that can be delivered by just words meanings or meaning of each line , verse or certain teaching can be done by the summary of whole chapter. Certain teaching can delivered just the practical essence of the subject . Then there are teachings that can be delivered simply by transmitting by oral transmission by reading the root text and students listen to each words.

Most of the transmissible lineage are in Tibetan for Tibetan teachers who carry this lineage mostly they received in original Tibetan language. It is rare in Sanskrit but mostly in Tibetan language at the moment I don't know if transmission can be done in English or Chinese, i have no idea.

This very much convey or deliver benefit thru oral transmission , does not require explaining of the subject or just reading . Then there is another way to deliver the teaching is *She lung*- explanatory transmission. This is what we are going to do. In order to do that not necessary have to recite in Tibetan as it is not a lung not oral transmission, it is more of receiving the blessings of the lineage from a Teacher who himself receive the *She lung* and the way of delivering the lineage is of course you read word by word whether in English , Tibetan, Chinese, Sanskrit without missing one word of the text .

As far as explanation is concerned you can do explanation on the highlighted points or you can do explanation in form of instruction of that particular verse, chapter, page, line which is very much whatever needed to be highlighted in brief explanation that has to be delivered. Otherwise most of the time is reading.

One of the reason why I choose this is when the first time Felix asked me to teach in detail, if we are going to do that especially my style, it will take a long long time, will get stuck somewhere it would be difficult to move on so maybe I thought it is not good idea. And also those individual that who has dharma discourse, discussion, teachings in the past with me, I have taught many Lam Rim, lojong in the past particularly in accordance of the Lam Rim chen mo have done quite a detailed explanation. That is why I thought of the *She lung* kind of way.

For example to have an idea what *She lung* is like His Holiness Dalai Lama or Ganden Tripa Rinpoche, many of Tibetan lamas when they give public teaching or other form mostly in form of *she lung*. They won't spend too much time on details, they make sure they read the whole text, much explanation or design within the time frame is given to the event sometimes the *she lung* can be detailed explanation, sometime brief explanation, can happen like that.

So therefore for this teaching I hope everyone have the text, if not, it is beneficial to have the text, the best before you come for the teaching, depends, we will see how many pages we can finish in one session. Next time onwards if you can read at least 5-10 pages we can cover the next session by yourself, you try to 'grab' the meaning of the reading the best you can, doesn't matter if it is right or wrong as long as it makes sense to yourself.

During those reading, certain specific knowledge, teaching you should highlight, best you memorise or at least take notes, highlight them then come for the teaching, again the teacher will read and explain. Even if teacher didn't explain and since you have read before now you are listening to the *She lung* then there are element of merits, condition of imprints of the past which you have accumulated since beginless lifetime, past fortunate times you have receive many teachings, many forms and those imprints will ripen, then it will crave the knowledge deeply in your continuum then once you finish go back and read one more time.

In our case we have one week gap, we do homework and read through it again and makes sense, make it familiar on to yourself then try to summarise into instructions to yourself in which you can use your daily life and apply them not just accumulating the words but now you have a summary in form of instructions in your own language, in your own way in your daily life. Now the teaching will stay in yourself in oneness.

It will greatly help in your spiritual growth so hope you are serious in this course, hope you can do that. Then so now think you will do the preliminary prayers since we are starting it today and maybe other times maybe we can start straight away.

Before you do that try to actualise the Lam Rim merit field. Some of you may be familiar with it. It is quite similar to Lama Chopa merit here but here the difference is the Lama Chopa merit field is Lama Tsongkhapa. But here the merit field main centre is Shakyamuni Buddha, in the centre of Shakyamuni Buddha heart you understand or visualise Buddha Varjadhara.

Then the right side of Shakyamuni Buddha the lineage of profound dharma starting from your immediate Guru who carries the lineage of all dharma blessings, profound lineage, instructional lineage, extensive lineage, initiation lineage, transmission instruction, philosophy, transition

lineage, lineage of vows and precepts so from your root guru then all the way to Lama Tsongkhapa in between all the lineage gurus, the Gurus of your gurus.

Then, right side extensive dharma then Lama Atisha. Lama Serlingpa, Lama Asanga then all the way up to Maitreya.

Then the left side the lineage of profound dharma, again your root gurus, all the lineage gurus then Lama Atisha, Shantideva, Nagarjuna all the way up to Buddha Manjushuri you can think like that. Then again for the purpose for receiving quick blessings of the Lam Rim effective and swift blessings of the lineages then behind and above Buddha Shakyamuni again you can visualise all the lineage Gurus up there so you can choose when you visualise the right and left extensive profound dharma lineage, Shakyamuni Buddha after that straight away Atisha, Serlingpa, Maitreya without visualising your lineage gurus also can.

But in order to receive swift and effective blessings you can visualise the Gurus from both sides of the profound and extensive lineage as well as above otherwise you can visualise all the lineage Gurus is above, behind Shakyamuni Buddha and above in the centre all the way up to the respective origin of the lineages where they come in forms of Mahasiddhas, panditas, deities, Buddhas, many different lineages whether to do with initiations, oral transmission, commentaries etc can be receive through deities, different Buddhas, different Mahasiddha, panditas.

Then in front of Shakyamuni Buddha, there are all the meditation deities of the four classes of the tantras, first layer is highest sutra tantra, action tantra, yoga tantra, kriya tantra then all the dharmapalas, those who are in the ten bhumis, after that those ordinary dharmapalas in gardens then you yourself in front of them that someone who is in total inspired to be on the path of enlightenment.

Physically also so much gesture of respect you can understand that you yourself adorned with pure robes, carrying pure motivation such as altruistic motivation then the manner of sitting cross legs, putting palm together in front your heart very much like looking up the merit field with so much inspiration like being in person in all the merits field like in a cosy room, then each and everyone of the merit field is directly focusing towards you with so much sense of compassion, caring gesture, very peaceful, auspicious with very high positive energy, then you try to understand, try to feel like that.

You are directing like tutoring, nurturing, each and everyone of this merit field, conditioning you individual to ripen the path without delay so that kind of atmosphere you should create from your heart.

Then you should visualise, understand entire celestial is filled with the sound of Dharma and you are nurture accordingly with your mental disposition then when hear a particular dharma that becomes a path not just hearing, leaving in you, understand it and becomes your PATH, you realise the dharma right there, then stages of the Lam Rim path actualise within you, then to create the auspiciousness you should think like that, visualise like that.

So there is a sense of genuine, refuge, altruistic aspiration, motivation, diligent is there, very much entire conducive condition is there for you, internal and external conditions.

So now here hold this confidence without any doubt I am not going to delay actualising entire Lam Rim including result of enlightenment. So then this impact we should carry throughout the

teachings for sure until complete the whole text and beyond until you actualise the resultant benefit of the dharma ,the actual enlightenment .

One should carry this positive energy within you so when before and after teaching when we read the text, you have the similar, not just you are reading one journal, you are reading something which purify , nurture your heart like extracting nectar joy, sense of joy, immediate impact to yourself.

So if we are able to carry such correct motivation, purpose, environment, then even if you don't understand anything you receive the benefit what is suppose to receive, whatever you understand wont just stay in notes or understanding in just words , it will become a Path.

Once it becomes the path, the path will not encounter obstacles. It is important after the teaching becomes a path there should not be obstacles on the path until we actualise resultant result . The Path should be smooth even interrupted by life, death, crises, aeons of being born in barbaric land, hell realm also not as obstacles to continue to progress the path. In that way like Buddha's precious life like Bodhisattva in hell realm the moment one slight condition ripen to you , you actualise the entire path , result in enlightenment . It is something like that.

So when I read, you read the text also or if you hear my teaching clearly, you can pay attention to my reading.

Prayers:

Praises to Shakyamuni Buddha

Heart Sutra

Snow Lion Face Dakini

Short mandala

This entire text can be introduce mainly into 4 headings.

First in order to authenticate the teachings talk about greatest of the author .In this text Lama Tsongkhapa will introduce brief life history of Lama Atisha who is the source of this lineage.

Second heading is order to generate sense of respect , faith and conviction of benefit of dharma then introduce greatest of the Dharma .

Thirdly on basis of the greatness of the author, the greatest of the teaching then discuss, learn about how to actualise this course , the manner of how to listen dharma, manner of how the teacher should teach the dharma. On the basis of these 3 main foundation then the rest of the main topics teachings will be discuss.

So in relation to Lam rim teachings there will be preliminary teaching to be discussed starting of preliminary or foundation of teachings, stages of the path, which is topic of Guru devotion then teaching on the practitioners , students ourselves to gain the conviction that I have ability to practise the profound teaching ,actualise the spiritual benefit of all these teachings in order to gain the realisations the preliminary teachings of the preciousness of the precious human life, the endowments and freedom.

Then very much briefly give the idea about who are the audience that Lam Rim is presenting to and to understand that in which category we the practitioners fall into. There discuss the characteristic of 3 capable beings, the 3 types of practitioners , the small, middle ,higher capable practitioners .

Once we determine that especially students of the dharma , specifically students of Lam Rim especially the student of the middle Lam Rim , one need to apprehend the entirety of Lam Rim teachings path from the very beginning from the Guru devotion practice and practice of of all the 3 capable being paths is the complete path for individual like yourself spiritual benefit, one have come by then to a conclusion the entirety Lam Rim teaching is for me, yes even though one maybe falling into small capable beings practitioners or middle or higher practitioners but as far as concerned with the actual spiritual benefit the entirety of the teachings to be adopted as one's own individual path , nothing to be discarded.

Someone who is a beginner, you have to come to a point that yes right now my main practice is refuge and observe the karma, even though that the teachings on bodhicitta ,tantra , is not ready to practice now but that is the ultimate main body practice that is to achieve , we need to come to that position.

Those individual that understand that I am already practising tantra , practising mahayana Bodhisattva path , even for you to have to come to a realization that all the preliminary practices , the teachings of small scopes, middle scope still needs to be practice as a preliminary, foundation . There is nothing to kinda like you have upgraded that you can forgot or discard the preliminary , minor practices. We have to come to that realizations.

Even some of us here may think we practice tantra , why I need to practice Lam Rim , I am already practising the swift path , why I need to practice for long path, instruction for long journey. That is a misconception that one didn't understand the Dharma , the actual process, meaning of the teaching and if that someone is aspiring for self liberation , Nirvana nothing concern of the rest of other living being , by understanding the current situation ,I myself cannot take care of myself , what is the point of taking care of the rest of the sentient beings so therefore I do not need to listen teachings of Bodhisattva , tantra .If you have that kind of understanding then that is a misunderstanding, misconception . If you are aspiring for self liberation then you should make greater aspirations that one day may I have courage, meritorious resources to practise the Bodhisattva yana, tantra yana for that purpose I will learn the rest of the teachings and I am going to plant the seed for the rest of the teaching that kind of manner like that.

So in short we have to come to a point that one single instructions of the Dharma not to be left out, we have to come to a position through the blessings we are going to share by coming together, the blessings of lineage gurus, blessings of Lama Tsongkhapa, we need to inspire to find instructions in every instructions for your spiritual benefit . We need to come to a point we see the teachings , see the requirement of every syllable of teachings , chapter, topic, philosophical, presentations of the teachings , different yantras of the teachings to be able to actualise as one's own gradual instruction.

If you find anything that is not useful then we are going out of track. Then also when we go through the teachings one thing that need to make sure it is happening , the teachings is talking about your life, your journey, correcting your way of life like a mirror. You should take this Lam Rim teaching as a mirror of your life. All flaws, mistakes to be able to spot straight away clearly. If there is any instructions that directly pointing out certain limitations that we have , one should highlight , take note on that . Then put into exercise afterwards using that instructions, that particular dharma teaching as an antidote to transform oneself.

Then it is also a mirror that what are the areas of your life , body speech and mind and environment to be adorned with qualities, spiritual qualities, characteristics, we need to spot that.

The manner of our body speech mind, what else to be adorned then those guidance, qualities of Buddhas, those tools of the dharma to be applied ,to accomplish ultimately to be adorned with the qualities of what the Bodhisattvas , the Buddhas has ; 80 minor and major marks of Buddhas - 5 concentrations, 5 wisdoms , 6 perfections , 10 perfections then 3 higher training etc, all these are ornaments our own body speech and mind to be adorned with so when the teacher talks about all those teachings we need to check whether all these qualities already exist within me or not , if not apply the practical tools how to actualize them.

Especially this is important for middle length lam rim as Lama Tsongkhapa has a special reason to compose this middle length lam rim even though he has already compose the great Lam Rim and small Lam Rim. If the student need a concise one he already composed it before , if students need the most elaborate, complete one he already compose the Lam Rim Chenmo .

Before he composed middle length lam rim (middle lam rim was composed 13 years later after he composed the great Lam rim) . Instruction wise the elaboration of the completeness of the Dharma teaching is all complete in the great Lam Rim. But during those 13 year period he did , as you know he was scholarly so successful, he was very much the ornament of scholars in snow land Tibet , then his compositions was highly praised undefeatable even those of philosophical presentations . Even looking into the great Lam Rim, wisdom chapter unbeatable with any other philosophical trainees -precise, absolute clear ,complete and the clearest illustrations of the intent of Buddha and Nagarjuna.

So then after that he also did an intense retreat period before he compose middle Lam Rim, he stop travelling extensively within the different region Tibet so he stop and stay in Ganden Monastery, he was very much conducting retreats. He also had a lot of new realisations , thru his extensive engagement scholarly with others and also his own inner cultivation . And he come to a point and not only that he went thru quiet health challenges, quite a serious health crises and he prophesied he is going to pass away soon . Lama Tsongkhapa passed away at a young age around 57 years old like that.

There is also a prophesy about his life span about an illness he had to go thru, then later part he saw urgency to have the entirety of his composition into one particular composition, which is concise , complete ,very much instructions, straight forward and highlighting main points and easy for the followers to apprehend, both in remembering the teachings as well as an application of the teachings, through there he compose the middle length Lam Rim.

Therefore the middle length Lam Rim , you can say it is instructional teaching , instructional guide of the Lam Rim. When you refer to Lam Rim Chenmo , it is very much philosophical , can be very academic, very structured kind of learning, even though middle length Lam Rim also present kinda of similar way obviously Lama Tsongkhapa reduced in particularly , critically to the subject of wisdom and emptiness, in Lam Rim chenmo you can find a lot of debate - inner and outer philosophers , if you don't have broad philosophical training , it can be quite confusing.

But when it comes to middle length Lam Rim , Lama Tsongkhapa already reduced the presentation of the opponents . The outer philosophers so very much focus on what to be accepted literally for us to be directly apply as a guide to our meditation. Then also in middle length Lam Rim, Lama Tsongkhapa gives extra focus on the 2 truths which serve as a foundation to actualise two main part of wisdom and emptiness , bodhicitta which will cause , direct cause 2 bodies of the Buddha, again he pay extra focus on the 2 truths so therefore one way very easy to understand if you read the middle length Lam Rim there is nothing to be caught up..

If you read in Tibetan , many be caught up with those old language , sometimes if you don't have a good of knowledge of the old writing when it comes to meaning is very straight but when it comes to English easy for you but for me I have trouble as I cant understand certain words...

I can compare the Tibetan writing and English writing which I normally do but while teaching I cant, for you super easy I can tell you and some of you have read the entire Lam rim , some of you are basic program student of FPMT and one of the the text they use is Middle length Lam Rim.

Anyway sometimes if you have some stress, sometimes nothing to do also stress ,you have shoulder pain , back pain ,so you read middle length Lam Rim so those of you who has been engaging in this discourse long time, I am sure by now you have read Lam rim Chenmo so now I will say read the middle length Lam Rim.

So the moment you read it , the back , shoulder pain will go away sometimes pain killer not helpful. Sometimes when you have emotional, physical, economic, relationship challenges , whatever challenges there instead of looking for therapist , of course you can go for medical check up but one thing that eases you immediately much more effective than panadol, is reading this text , doesn't matter which chapter it will make your day , beautiful day. If you feel lonely read it you will feel like you are surrounded by everybody, if you feel like too many people bothering you, read again ,you will feel quiet, peaceful so do that OK.

Also like to dedicate all these course to the fulfilment of our most precious late guru, Lama Zopa Rinpoche's holy wishes to be fulfilled and we individually collect merits to actualise the reincarnation of Lama Zopa Rinpoche not only actualise but the reincarnation to be free from whatever inner outer obstacles ,for the reincarnation to manifest all the qualities of Lama Zopa Rinpoche and able to deliver effectively the legacy of Rinpoche. And to individual's Gurus who are no more living with us , dedicate to them and we also dedicate for the long life and good health of all Gurus , His Holiness and spiritual gurus, family and friends' good health long life meaningful and especially dedicate this to repay our parents kindness . Each and everyone dedicate few hours physically discipline motivationally altruistically then your eye senses everything is very much bound with dharma Lam Rim.

There is no greater way repay kindness of our parents, we are children of our parents so we take this opportunity to repay their kindness whether they are living or not they will definitely benefit . This way you take care not only of one life but entire life , the entirety of Lam Rim including enlightenment then also dedicate this for world peace, harmony within individual , harmonious mind ,body , speech ,environment, family peace , happiness, community , country to country and all the other inconvenience which is happening like war, natural disasters , diseases, whatever phenomena other there which causes inconveniences to the peace and happiness of all sentient being to be overcome so we individually collectively dedicate for that.

Middle length Lam rim from the preliminary has 4 headings:

1. The Greatness of the Author

Respectfully, I PROSTRATE at the feet of those venerable holy beings filled with compassion.

Blessed One, lord of this Endurance world (sahā loka),
Buddha's regent, Maitreya, lord of the Dharma,
Mañjuḥoṣa, sole father of those gone to bliss (sugata),

Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga, foretold by the Victor, bowing to you with respect I will here explain once more, in a summary fashion, the stages of the path of profound view and vast conduct for the sake of making them easy to access.

So as I mentioned before here Lama Tsongkhapa has already express the intent of the composition of this text , this is the summary for Lam Rim Chenmo ,the great lam rim and it is also making it easier access in understanding , it is very much referring to the great Lam rim has lots of philosophical presentation so here he reduced that so beginners like me can easily understand . So then he pay veneration to the Buddha's regent Maitreya (is the founding lineage of extensive dharma) , Majukhosha is founding lineage of profound dharma then holder of the profound dharma is Nagarjuna, founder of extensive dharma is Asanga so the purpose of paying homage is to clear all inner outer secret obstacles to the composition of the text and actualise all the conducive conditions to bring benefit out of it, fulfil the purpose.

The Dharma to be presented here explains how fortunate are led to the level of buddhahood through the stages of the path to enlightenment. It summarizes all the points of the Victor's scriptures, follows the tradition of the two great trailblazers, Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga, constitutes the Dharma system of supreme beings who progress to the level of omniscience, and contains without omission all the stages to be practised by the three types of persons(*the 3 capable beings*).

The scholars of glorious Vikramaśīla Monastery considered it vital to commence with three preliminaries :

Here talking about the characteristics qualities of composing the text , Lama Tsongkapa follow the master of Vikramasila which is one of the earliest Buddhist university before Nalanda monastery /university, so criterias /manners when you do composition so Lama Tsongkhapa didn't just compose any way how he think but he compose based on proper ways of composition like past panditas which contains the 3 great preliminaries:

- the greatest of author of the dharma
- the greatness of the Dharma
- and the way to explain and listen to the Dharma.

In accordance with that, this guide to the stages of the path to enlightenment has four parts:

- (1) showing the greatness of the author so as to demonstrate that this Dharma is a pure source,
- (2) showing the greatness of the Dharma so as to generate respect for the instructions,
- (3) how the Dharma possessing those two greatness should be listened to and explained, and
- (4) the stages by which a student should be guided through the actual instructions.

SHOWING THE GREATNESS OF THE AUTHOR SO AS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THIS DHARMA IS A PURE SOURCE

Generally speaking, the present instructions are the ones that the venerable protector Maitreya gives in his Ornament for Clear Knowledge

(Abhisamayālaṃkāra).

So this Lam rim, even Great Lam rim or middle length lamrim , the main source of this teaching is the ornament of clear knowledge of by Maitreya , one of the most important paramita sutra , so that is the main source.

They are based specifically on Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment (Bodhipathapradīpa) (another source of this teaching is Lamp for the Path is Lama Atisha)

[2] so that its author is also the author of the present text.

(so in that regard Lama Tsongkhapa honoured both Maitreya and Atisha as composer of this text so in this particular text Lam rim you can claim composition of Maitreya and Lama Atisha and that shows there no single distracted kind of ideas from the root source of the teachings, there is nothing Lama Tsongkhapa made up , everything is authentic that is what he is trying to say here.)

Other than under the name of the great master Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna, he is also widely known as the glorious Atiśa. His greatness is threefold: how he took birth in an excellent family, how he obtained his excellent qualities on that basis, and how he performed deeds for the sake of the teachings after obtaining the excellent qualities.

So ultimately in the greatness of any individual especially spiritual teachers very much is turning the wheel of the Dharma of course there are auspiciousness of being born in certain family, auspiciousness of the families , auspiciousness of him acquiring many different knowledge but for the spiritual greatness comes from the turning the wheel of the dharma, how effective and extensive of turning the wheel of Dharma from there you can understand how great that particular spiritual teacher is.

Now we are talking of Lama Atisa but we need to think about yourself ,we as spiritual practitioners we too carry equally the preservation of Dharma , turning the wheel of Dharma of great masters are , is the contribution of perseverance of Dharma and we as learners have equal responsibilities so therefore the success of encountering dharma in our life is for us to master the knowledge, preserve the Dharma in learning the complete teaching , extensive rigours studies then the secondly, preserve the Dharma through realisations on stages of the Path and that will determine the greatness of yourself of being a spiritual practitioners so if you dedicate much time learning the Dharma you realise many realisations stages of the path and that will determine the meaningfulness of your life.

HOW ATIŚA TOOK BIRTH IN AN EXCELLENT FAMILY

According to the translator's Praise

Here the translator is referring to Natso Lotsawa, he is the delegate sent to Nalanda to invite Atisha and he also took opportunity to study Sanskrit language and master of Tibetan language and when Lama Atisha arrive in Tibet he served as Atisa's close attendant and translator.

Praise: 1

Due east in the excellent country of Sahor 2 (referring to eastern India) lies a city of great size — namely, Vikramaṇipura.

In its midst is the royal court,
an extremely spacious palace
called “the one with golden banners.”
Its pleasures, might, and riches
rival those of Chinese emperors.
King of that land is Kalyāṇaśrī,
Padmagarbha, Candragarbha (*earlier name of Lama Atisha*)
and Śrīgarbha they are called.
Again, Prince Padmagarbha has
five royal consorts and nine sons —
the oldest one, named Puṇyaśrī, is a great paṇḍita
widely known as Dhanaśrī.
The youngest brother, Śrīgarbha,
is the bhikṣu Vīryacandra.
The middle one is Candragarbha —
he is our exalted guru.

HOW ATIŚA OBTAINED HIS EXCELLENT QUALITIES ON THAT BASIS:

This has two parts: how he obtained the excellent qualities of vast scriptural knowledge and how he obtained the excellent qualities of realization of its correct accomplishment.

HOW ATIŚA OBTAINED THE EXCELLENT QUALITIES OF VAST SCRIPTURAL KNOWLEDGE

By the age of twenty-one, Atiśa had studied the four areas of knowledge common to Buddhists and non-Buddhists (languages, logical reasoning, crafts, and medicine) and was an excellent scholar. In particular, the great Drolungpa relates how, at the age of fifteen, Atiśa heard Dharmakīrti’s Drop of Reasoning (Nyāyabindu) just once and then defeated in debate a non-Buddhist 5 intellectual renowned for his erudition. This spread Atiśa’s fame far and wide.

So during that time there was a great debate happened between Buddhists and non Buddhists scholars they made a bet whoever wins has to convert, an intense kind of debate. So Lama Atisa served on many occasions and saved many scholars and not only that he managed to bring non Buddhists into this Buddhist practice.

Then he requested a complete empowerment from the glorious master yogi of the main temple on Black Mountain, the guru Rāhulagupta, who had received direct visions of Hevajra and a prophecy from Vajraḍākinī.
(very much like Heruka and Vajrayogi. Rahulagupta who is one of the Mahasidha who has the direct blessings of mother tantra practices)

[3]

He was given the secret name Jñānaguhyavajra. Up to the age of twenty-nine he studied the Vajrayāna under numerous highly realized gurus and thereby became knowledgeable in all the texts and instructions. When the thought “I am the great master of secret mantra” occurred to him, ḍākinīs appeared to

him in a dream and showed him several volumes of tantra he had not seen before, which lowered his pride.

So dakinis here refer to dharma protectors especially if you practice tantra with a tantric deity there is always a Dharma protector so whenever there is negative emotions ,worldly concerns, misuse of Dharma ,tantra like here in Atisa's case he has great pride he thought that he is the greatest , egoistic pride arises, then the dharma protectors like the dakinis came into dreams so came into different form of experiences to alert ourselves , to realize our mistakes and limitations so the dakinis and dharma protectors if you practice well they will support you, fulfil your spiritual means , clear obstacles in life but when we misuse dharma, misunderstood the dharma instead of subdue the delusions but increases the delusions then they give us same sense of lessons like punishment.)

Both in his dreams and directly, Atiśa's gurus and personal deities then advised him that vast benefit would accrue for the teachings and many beings if he took the appropriate monastic vows, and upon their encouragement he sought ordination.

Lama Atisa become monk later in age , many of you here not too late but not worry if practice , to practise Lam rim not necessary to become a monk/nun. Just in case anyone is thinking of becoming a monk/ nun , look at Atisha , now worries. I always share the story of the old man he is about 80 something and he become monk after having a huge family and in few years times he achieve Arhatship)

The great upholder of monastic discipline Śīlārakṣita, an elder of the Mahāsāṃghika tradition who had attained the concentration of single-pointed focus on ultimate reality belonging to the path of preparation, officiated as abbot and gave him the name Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna.

So from one of school of Hinayana, Mahasamghika tradition, Silaraksita under his guidance, Atisa was trained initially and was given the name Dipankara Srijnana.

Up to the age of thirty-one, Atiśa studied the higher and lower baskets of scriptures of the Buddhist dialectical and metaphysical traditions, and in particular, for twelve years, the Great Detailed Explanation (Mahāvibhāṣā) under Guru Dharmarakṣita in Odantapuri.

There was a place he studied all the philosophical treatises , such as abidharma (lower baskets of scriptures) , paramita is upper, higher teachings.

As he was very well versed in the scriptures of the four original traditions, he had an infallible grasp of the finest details of ways of behaviour that should be adopted and discarded according to the different traditions, such as the monastic rules concerning giving and receiving alms.

So the 4 school is referring to the 4 philosophical schools- he extensively studied the 4 schools, he also studied the vinaya . By studying the 4 different schools he is able to differentiate the divisions of 4 philosophical schools not only that he is able to understand easily by diving into the extensive compositions of earlier masters including Buddha's own words such as Kangyur etc , without understanding the presentation of 4 schools it can be quite confusing . By studying vinaya sutra which is very much within the lower basket of scripture , he is able to not only uphold his

individual liberation vows purely, he also inspire and grant liberation vows to others , he acts as monastery Abbot for other monks and nuns to the path .

HOW ATÍSA OBTAINED THE EXCELLENT QUALITIES OF REALIZATION OF ITS CORRECT ACCOMPLISHMENT

Generally speaking, all the scriptural teachings by the Victor are contained in the three precious baskets, (*baskets of abidharma , vinaya and basket paramita sutra*) so likewise all the realized teachings are contained in the three precious trainings. (*common to hinayana and mahayana -higher morality, concentration and wisdom*)

ATIŚA'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE TRAINING IN ETHICS

In this regard the training in ethics is often praised in the scriptures and in the commentaries as the foundation of all excellent qualities, such as the trainings in concentration and wisdom. Therefore it is necessary, first of all, to have qualities of realization that are based on the training in ethics. In this regard there are three kinds.

The 3 training – morality, concentration, wisdom acts as cause of effect. Without proper training in morality no concentration can be developed , without training in concentration no proper wisdom can be developed . Now relate to ourselves if we don't observe pure moral ethic then very difficult to obtain concentration like shamatha , without that then no way we can realize wisdom of emptiness so we learn from Lama Atisa examples.

H OW ATIŚA POSSESSED THE HIGHEST PRĀTIMOKṢA VOWS

(such as individual liberation vows , refuge vows, sangha vows)

Having received the vows of a fully ordained monk, Atiśa guarded them the way a yak guards its tail. A yak is so attached to its tail that it would sooner risk its life to save a strand of tail hair caught on a tree than part with it, even when threatened by a hunter. That is how Atiśa guarded the foundation of the training he had undertaken in every detail, to say nothing of the major rules, so that he came to be called the Elder (sthavira) who is a great upholder of monastic discipline.

Lama Atisha was called as an Elder , someone who is matured in vinaya precept, monastery precepts in respect of a role model,guru teacher like that because of Lama Atisa strict training in observation morality . When you look at picture of Lama Atisha at the right side there is a kadampa stupa that symbolise very much of Lama Atisa's pureness in moral conduct, pureness in moral, vinaya ethic so whenever while he was walking ,talking, eating or whenever he feels the slightest transgression in precepts right there he will prostrate and confess in front of the stupa he is carrying and he will confess there and restore his vows, that much seriousness. So when he you see Lama Atisha 's picture you see the stupa , you understand how strict we have to be with our moral precepts , vows. So many of us have receive refuge vows so we have to be strict in upholding the refuge vows.

Some of you have 5 lay vows even one , once you receive it you must uphold it as pure as possible. Any doubt /transgressions immediately purify . Some of you sangha monk/nun even more strict , its a lifetime precept , if any transgression , purify that.

Many of us have Bodhisattva vows , you have to retake Bodhisattva vows everyday 6 times if possible many times .Whenever we are awake in our thoughts we can restore the Bodhisattva vows, refuge vows meaning always execute or infuse by bodhicitta motivation in every action that you do that is the way how you restore Bodhisattva vows, that is the way how you purify any transgression happen in relation to bodhisattva precepts. Whenever you think of Buddha, dharma ,sangha express respect to them and you are restoring the refuge vows , you are purifying the transgression happen in relation to refuge vows.

Then tantric vows ,many of us have tantric vows , so whenever you think of 5 dhayani Buddhas, whenever you think of disciplining your 5 aggregates, physical, feeling, compositional ,mental that is the time restoring the tantric vows, you are purifying the transgression. Then as a monastic, always be mindful, remembering that I am monk, nun, sangha , always remembering the value of robes, haircut, saffron maroon robes and always remembering that you carry the same responsibility like Shakyamuni Buddha, same responsibility like your vinaya precept Abbot that will help.

Then day to day keeping up like that, putting up like that as pure as possible your precepts then for refuge whenever you have opportunity in front of altar , open your sadhana , lam rim book then recite refuge and bodhicitta prayers and right there you also restore the Bodhisattva vows. First 2 lines refuge , second line is Bodhisattva vows then more than that if you get opportunity in front of altar , whenever you do certain practices of in relations to certain Bodhisattva there you retake Bodhisattva precepts, aspirations Bodhisattva precepts, engaging Bodhisattva precepts or just simply by the 4 line prayers you can do that.

As for the 5 lay vows similarly while you recite the refuge prayers you restore them 3 times . For tantric the line in relation to the 5 Dhayani Buddhas in 6 session guru yoga you can repeat them like that or recite 6 sessions guru yoga which has everything except the sangha precepts otherwise all the precepts just by doing the yoga you can restore, you can purify the transgressions. Then as for sangha , monk and nun whenever there is opportunity , whenever possible at least once a year try to go to monastery, nunnery where they conduct the confession ceremony , sojong , so try to participate and there you try to purify.

*Any mistakes are mine alone, Angeline lim
(please refer to video or audio files)*