

The Lineage Traditions of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism (1)

- The Dzogchen Nyingthig Lineage of the Long Transmission (Kama)
- The Sketch on The Tradition of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism

By Vajra Master Yeshe Thaye

The lineages of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhist teachings are classified into three major types: the long transmission (Ring Gyu) of the extensive Kama Lineage, the short transmission (Nye Gyu) of the profound Terma Lineage, and the extremely short transmission of Pure Visions (Dang Nang) when teachings were directly received by the Masters in pure visions from gurus and/or deities. We will first describe the first type in this issue, with the remaining ones to be described in later issues.

(A) The Dzogchen Nyingthig Lineage of the Long Transmission (Kama)

According to the “**Nine Yanas**” (Theg-Pa dGu) of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism (which includes: (i) the Three ‘Sutric Yanas’ of Sravakayana, Pratyekabuddhayana, and Bodhisattvayana; (ii) the Three ‘Outer Tantric Yanas’ of Kriyayoga, Caryayoga, and Yogatantra; and (iii) the Three ‘Inner Tantric Yanas’ of Mahayoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga), the highest teaching is known as the ‘**Great Perfection**’ (Skt.:Atiyoga; Tib.: **Dzogpa Chenpo**), which is the direct method for realizing the nature of the mind and for attaining Buddhahood in this very body and in this very lifetime, and is considered as the summit of the “Nine Yanas”. The “**Heart Essence**” teachings (known as “**Nyingthig**”) explain precisely the various methods for directly actualizing the innermost teachings of **Dzogpa Chenpo**. Thus, the “**Dzogchen Nyingthig**” fundamentally deals with the expression of the doctrine of the Three Perfect Bodies (Kayas) of a Fully Awakened Being, and the tradition of this teaching has been transmitted through three different lineages of spiritual transmissions:-

- The Wisdom Mind Lineage of the Buddhas** – this spiritual transmission is from the Primordial Buddha Samantabhadra (Tib.: Kuntuzangpo) of Dharmakaya to the Five Self-Manifesting Buddhas of the Sambhogakaya. In this lineage, the teacher transmits the teachings to a disciple, without using words or any other indications, only with his all pervading wisdom mind.
- The Symbolic Lineage of the Awareness-Holders (Vidyadhara)** – the Sambhogakaya Buddha Vajrasattva (Tib.: Dorje Sempa) transmitted all empowerments and teachings to the Nirmanakaya Prahevajra (Tib.: Garab Dorje), the first Master in human form. It was from Prahevajra that this transmission was passed onto Manjushrimitra (Tib.: Jampal Shegnyen), Shri Simha (Tib.: Palgyi



Dharmakaya Samantabhadra



Sambhogakaya Vajrasattva



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Nirmanakaya Prahevajra



Manjushrimitra



Shri Simha

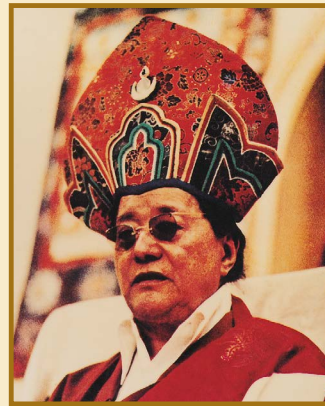
Senge), Jnanasutra (Tib.: Yeshe Do), Mahapandita Vimalamitra (Tib.: Drimed Shegnyen) and Guru Padmasambhava (Tib.: Guru Pema Jungne, or more commonly known as Guru Rinpoche to the Tibetans). Here, an Awareness-Holder, a being who has direct and pure vision of the nature of reality, manifests to a receptive disciple and transmits the teachings by means of pronouncing a mantra or showing a sign.

(c) **The Oral Lineage of the Realized Beings** – here the complete set of oral transmissions (lung), empowerments (wang) and pith-instructions (tri) are transmitted by word of mouth from the Masters to their disciples. This lineage of spiritual transmission in Tibet initially spread through two traditions at around the eighth century. One tradition which originated from Mahapandita Vimalamitra is known as the **“Vima Nyingthig”**, while the other tradition which originated from Guru Padmasambhava is came to be known as the **“Khandro Nyingthig”**. Then, it was later that both of these ‘Innermost Essence’ transmissions meet in Kunkhyen Longchen Rabjampa, from whom the uninterrupted oral transmission of these teachings have extended until the present day.

Kunkhyen Drimed Ozer Longchen Rabjampa (1308-1363), the great Omniscient Lord of Dharma (Kunkhyen Choje), was one of the greatest Dzogchen Masters in the Nyingma tradition, and also the most brilliant and original writer. He was the author of about 270 works, of which only about twenty-five survive, and amongst which the “Seven Treasuries” (Dzo Dun) and the “Three Trilogies” are most well-known to this very day. Longchenpa’s “Seven Treasuries” were written to elucidate the extraordinarily profound meanings of the Seventeen Main Tantras of Dzogpa Chenpo and of the Nine Yanas. In order to transmit the actual practice of Dzogchen, Longchenpa collected his own “Concealed Treasures” (Terma), together with those of Chetsun

Senge Wangchuk and of Pema Ledreltsal (the immediate previous incarnation of Longchenpa himself), into five sets of “Nyingthig Yabzhi”, in which he synthesized the “Khandro Nyingthig” of Guru Rinpoche and the “Vima Nyingthig” of Vimalamitra, and explained all the practical details in light of his own realizations as the “Three Inner Essences” (the Lama Yangtik, the Khandro Yangtik and the Zabmo Yangtik).

The “Canonical Teachings” (Kama) have thus been transmitted in an unbroken lineage directly from the Primordial Buddha Samantabhadra, all the way down to the present day. These Kama teachings were collected by Terdak Lingpa (1646-1714, founder of the Mindroling Monastery) and his brother Lochen Dharma Shri (1654-1717), and was later re-edited (and published in fifty-eight volumes) by the late His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche Jigdral Yeshe Dorje as the “Nyingma Kama”.

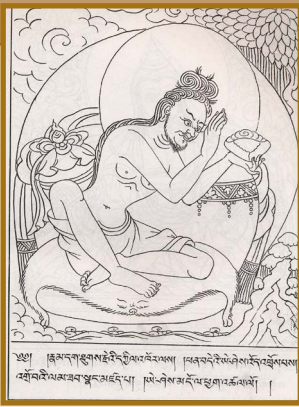


H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche II

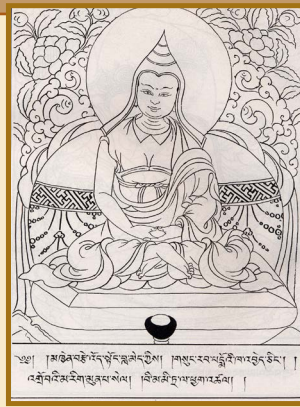


H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche III

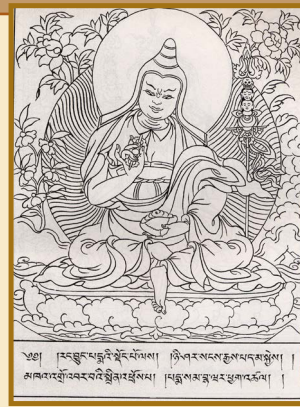




Jnanasutra



Vimalamitra



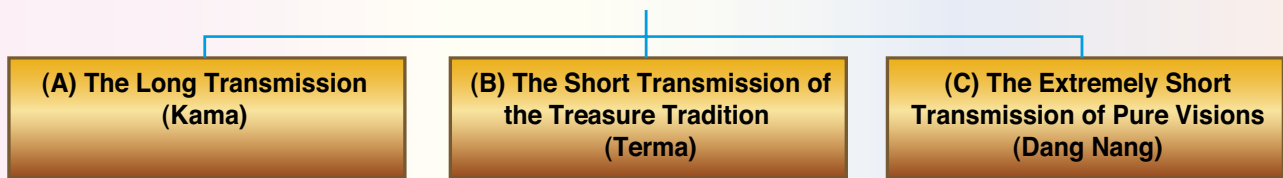
Padmasambhava



Longchen Rabjampa

A Sketch on The Tradition of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism

Three Main Transmissions of the The Nyingma School



(A) The “Dzogchen Nyingthig” Lineage of the Long Transmission (Kama)

