

Outline for Class 4 Understanding Lineage

How Buddhadharma Came to Tibet

Vajrayana was taught by the Buddha and realized by many great Indian masters before appearing in Tibet.

A realized Indian master, Padmasambhava, brought the teachings to Tibet in the 7th and 8th centuries A.D.

Later, after a period of persecution and decline, Marpa Lotsawa reintroduced the practice of Buddhadharma in Tibet, studying with the great Indian master Naropa and others.

The Four Schools of Buddhadharma in the Tibetan Tradition

The Nyingma lineage was introduced by the great Indian master Padmasambhava, mentioned above.

The Mahamudra lineage of the Kagyu school can be traced to the Indian masters Tilopa, Naropa, and Maitripa. Marpa Lotsawa, mentioned above, brought this Mahamudra lineage from India to Tibet, who in turn transmitted his teachings to the great yogi Milarepa.

The Sakya lineage can be traced to the great Tibetan master Khon Lui Wangpo, a disciple of Padmasambhava. Khon Konchok Gyalpo, a direct descendent of Khon Lui Wangpo, and Sachen Kunga Nyingpo are two of the five Sakya forefathers.

The Gelukpa lineage stems from the work and realization of the great Tibetan master Tsongkhapa.

The Kagyu School: Gampopa Joining Kadampa with Mahamudra

The great Dharma master Gampopa was a student of Milarepa. Gampopa joined monasticism, in particular the profound Mahayana mind training (Lojong) teachings of Atisha Dipankara, and the vajrayana teachings of the mahamudra school, into one stream of teachings.

The Nyingma and Kagyu lineages are very close. Realized masters have often held the transmissions and teachings of both lineages throughout history.

The Kagyu Lineage is especially renowned for its great practitioners. For this reason, it is also referred to as “The Practice Lineage.”

Arya Sangha

In the history of Buddhism, unbroken lineages of realized bodhisattvas and great teachers have always played a key role in the path of students.

The Role and Position of Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche in the Lineage

The lineage of Karmapas goes back to the first Karmapa, who was a student of Gampopa. To date, there have been 17 Karmapas. Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche is the spiritual representative of His Holiness Karmapa in North America. The teachings of this curriculum have been checked and approved by him.

How KTD and the KTCs Function

The KTD monastery in Woodstock; the local centers. How your local center functions. Opportunities for meditation and study. Programs with visiting teachers.

Discussion of the Curriculum

An overview of what is available. A discussion of how KTC students can develop themselves in practice and study in a graduated way.

Student Readings

The Four Dharmas of Gampopa Transcript.

Importance of a Spiritual Friend Transcript, unedited (Tape AQ 0190).

Dharma Paths, by Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche, pp. 15–39.

The Kagyu Lineage Transcript.

Meditation in Action, Chapter 1 (“The Life and Example of Buddha”), by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. (A further reading with no magical references for “Life of the Buddha” would be useful.)

Optional Readings Suggested for Teachers

A History of Indian Buddhism, by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche. (This may be our best source for life of the Buddha.)

A History of the Karmapas, by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche (and various other transcripts about lineage history).

The Words of My Perfect Teacher, (on the three yantras) by Paltrul Rinpoche. Section on student’s motivation in relation to Dharma and teacher.

The Small Golden Key, by Thinley Norbu. Brief section on the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism, pp. 14–20. Chapter on the differences between the three yantras, pp. 23–32.

Ground, Path, Fruition, first seminar on “Ground,” tapes 1 and 2, discusses “Hearing, Contemplating, and Meditating,” students and teachers, and the three baskets. Tape set 077.

Ground, Path, Fruition, second seminar on “Path” (unedited). Talk 1 reviews the three yantras. Tape set 078.

The Awakened One, by Sherap Chodzin Kohn, especially chapters 1–4.

Note

In general, it would be good to provide students with a list of recognized Kagyu teachers, to point them in the direction of appropriate reading material. Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche should be consulted about this. Such a list may be made available to the KTC centers.

Handout

“On Meeting a Spiritual Friend,” by Ven. Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche