

Dear Dharma Friends,

Below are parts of the teaching excerpted from H.E. Kyabje Drukpa Choegon Rinpoche's Dharma Book – Cloudless Clarity, Volume I.

The full contents of the book are as the Table of Contents stated as follow:

- I) *Understanding the Foundation of Tibetan Buddhism*
 - a) *On Dharma – the Teachings of Buddha*
 - b) *On Vajrayana - the Secret Mantrayana*
 - c) *On Vajrayana Lineages – the different schools of Vajrayana*
 - d) *On some common “title” - the salutation in Vajrayana*
 - e) *On some common descriptions in Vajrayana - Bodhisattva, Daka, Dakini and Dharma Protector*
 - f) *On Refuge - the doorway to Buddhism*
 - g) *On Guru - the master*
 - h) *On Samaya - the vows of Vajrayana:*
- II) *On Proper Conduct – the right attitudes during Dharma related activities*
- III) *On Buddhist practices – The 6 Paramitas*
 - a) *Transcendent Generosity (dana)*
 - b) *Transcendent Discipline/Morality (shila)*

Choegon Rinpoche's Dharma Q&A – Part III

On Vajrayana Lineages – the different schools of Vajrayana:

- 1) **Can Rinpoche please explain why there are so many different sects in Vajrayana.**

A: In India, there were several lineages, such as the lineage of Maitrepa, and of Nargajuna, Tilopa, Virupa, etc. To call these 'sects' is a little bit too heavy, I think. Probably we should just say lineages as this is much more appropriate.

When we say Kagyu Lineage, we are basically referring to following the teachings of **Dorje Chang**, which were passed down to the great Indian yogi **Tilopa (988-1069)**, and then to **Naropa (1016 - 1100)**, **Marpa (1012 - 1097)**, **Milarepa (1040 - 1123)**, and **Gampopa (1079 - 1153)**. This is called the Kagyu Lineage.

There are also the teachings from **Dorje Chang** to **Virupa (9th Century)** and, through many great mahasiddhas, to **Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (1092-1158)**, **Lopon Sonam Tsemo (1142-1182)**, **Jetsun Dragpa Gyaltsen (1147-1216)**, **Sakya**

Pandita Kunga Gyaltzen (1182-1251), and **Drogon Phagpa Lodro Gyaltzen (1235-1280)**. These are the 5 major masters of Sakyapa. This is called the Sakya Lineage.

The teachings of **Palden Atisha (982 - 1054)** were passed to **Drom Tonpa (1005 - 1064)**, and from him to successive great masters down to **Je Tsongkhapa Lobsang Drakpa (1357-1419)**. This practice lineage is called Gelugpa.

Guru Padmasambava, the great Indian Guru, who came to Tibet in the eighth century founded the Nyingma Lineage, together with many masters like **King Trisong Deutsen (742-797)** and the Great Abbot, **Shantarakshita**.

Nyingma basically means old lineage. Kagyu, Sakya, Gelug: these three are called new lineages, or Sarma.

The period of the new lineages, or new translation schools, began in the late 9th and early 10th century. Translations from the 7th through the 9th centuries, constitute the "Old School of Early Translations" (snga 'gyur Nyingmapa), while the others are known as the "New Schools of Later Translations" (phyi 'gyur gsar ma). The New Schools are Kagyu, Sakya, and Kadampa. The Old School refers to Nyingma.

Any lineage that precedes the passing of the famous Indian master, **Pandita Smrttijnana (10th – 11th century)**, the guru of Palden Atisha, is called Nyingma tradition. The death of Smrttijnana marks, in Tibet, the end of the period of the Old or Early Translations. After that the new Sarma traditions—Kagyu, Sakya and Kadampa—were established.

At that time, the Nyingma tradition of early transmissions, called Kama, had been declining tremendously, and by the 15th or early 16th centuries it had weakened considerably. Then Palden Atisha came to Tibet, while many great Tibetan masters went to India to learn Buddhism. After that the Nyingma tradition was revived and renewed by teachings from different places, particularly by the discovery of Termas, the treasures of teachings that had been hidden by Guru Rinpoche to be revealed by Tertons, or treasure revealers. The Nyingma tradition became stronger through the practices of Terma. One of the great masters in Mindroling, called **Minling Terdak lingpa and Lochen Dharmashri (1654-1718 apx)**, revealed many termas, and revitalized the Nyingma Kama tradition.

These are the different lineages, but now people call them 'sects'. However, we are not sectarian. Vajrayana cannot be sectarian. Unfortunately, sectarianism seems to be more and more evident, particularly in Vajrayana traditions in places like Taiwan. Here in Malaysia too, there is a lot of sectarianism. This is not very healthy. Within the Vajrayana practices, we must maintain our lineage but we should always respect and be ready to receive precious teachings from great masters of any other lineages. That's how it has been in ancient times in India, Nepal and Tibet. Even nowadays non-sectarianism is still happening, but not in Malaysia. So, if you see a great

master, a genuine master, then you must be ready to receive his teaching, not depending and counting on the sect. Sectarianism is not buddha's teaching, it is mere worldly dharma. And, in fact, there are not so many lineages, although they are indeed different: Kagyu, Nyingma, Sakya, and Gelug.

Why are there lineages? Well. Without a lineage, one cannot practice vajrayana, as it requires continuity blessings from enlightened beings. So, that's why there are lineages, and people follow a particular one.

Then, must one remain in only one lineage? No, not necessarily. However, it may be more difficult to follow many lineages at one time. This is because people are not that learned nowadays. Most people have so much confusion in their minds. Unless one is ready, to change from one lineage to another, from one master to another, might present problems. That's why some masters advise people to remain in one lineage as maybe they are not yet ready or they might be confused.

Your next question will probably be how will we know who is the genuine master? This is also the concern of some masters. That's the reason why they ask you to stay in one lineage, because it's hard for you to understand who the genuine master is. So one may not know or find the genuine master until much later unless one is capable and sure. Even then, the different lineages have great masters, so one should be ready to receive teachings from all great masters of different lineages, without being sectarian.
