

~ *The Four Lineages* ~

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In Tibetan Buddhism, we have mainly four lineages. These four lineages we liken to the four legs of a table. Each lineage has unique practices and unique ways to engage the Buddha Dharma.

So, the *Nyingma* – Nyingma in Tibetan means the early translation, the early lineage, something like that. And the Nyingma lineage was brought into Tibet by Padmasambhava, a great Indian enlightened master.

The Nyingma mainly focuses on what we call *Dzogchen*. Dzogchen means “the great perfection,” and its main focus is the view. “The view” means to understand the nature of our mind. So for the Nyingma, first and foremost what we call “pointing-out teachings” will be the main focus. Once you have recognized your true nature – the nature of yourself and the nature of phenomena – to maintain that recognition, meditation is taught. So from the view, meditation is established– that is mainly the Nyingma style.

The second lineage is Kagyu. Kagyupa means “the lineage of transmission” or “lineage of the word.” The Kagyupa started in Tibet by Marpa Lotsawa. Marpa is a family name and *Lotsawa* means “translator.”

In Kagyupa, the main focus is meditation and there is a lot of emphasis on experiential practice. So, the great teacher Marpa Lotsawa’s main student was Milarepa. Milarepa was a wandering yogi who stayed in the mountains for his entire life, focusing on meditation. And this is what we call an “experiential lineage.” It is not just intellectual understanding, but you bring it into your heart, into the practice, into your experiential level, and then go to the next level.

Once you have learned meditation step-by-step, experientially, you go into the view. The view is to recognize your true nature, the nature of all phenomena.

These both are what we call “practice lineages.” The Kagyu and Nyingma both emphasize practice and meditation. The Kagyupas first try to get experience, and through the experience you learn the knowledge. For Nyingmapas, first you get the knowledge, then you get the experience. That is kind of the difference, in other words.

And Sakyapa’s main focus is tantric practice. The development stage which is working with the imagination, and the completion stage which is working with the body: the essence of the energies and nerves. Then, of course, the view is one taste, the union of samsara and

nirvana. The view is similar to that of dzogchen and the Kagyupas. So, their particular main focus is the tantric practice.

After that, Gelugpa started. The Gelugpa school began with Tsongkhapa. Tsongkhapa was a great master. So Tsongkhapa really focused on education and studies, especially the sutras, which is the Buddhist philosophy. Studying those was the main focus. Through that, you train the mind and then, eventually, you practice meditation and the view. So, the main focus of the Gelugpas is Buddhist philosophy.

Of course, with all these different lineages, the essence is the same. It is not that one is better than another. It is the same. It also depends on people's personality and mentality. Therefore, there are many different lineages. All their essences are the same from the Buddha. So, all these lineages depend on a person's personality and mentality. That is why many different lineages came about, and it is not that one is better than another. There are differences in emphasis, and if you take and apply it in your life, it will be beneficial.