

The Nyingma Tradition in Tibetan Buddhism and The Path to attaining a “Rainbow Body”...

The Nyingma is the oldest of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism, the other three being Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelugpa. In the Nyingma tradition there are nine vehicles that the entire Buddhist teachings are divided into. The most common are the Hearer, Solitary Realizer and Bodhisattva which were taught by Buddha Shakyamuni and included in the sutras. There then are three “Outer” ones which consist of Kriya Tantra, Upa Tantra and Yoga Tantra. Kriya focuses on the practice of correct external behaviour, physical and verbal and is aimed at the practice of visualisation and purification. Upa focuses internally as well as externally and the goal is to develop a deeper affinity with the meditational deity (Yidam). The last, The Yoga Tantra aims to develop the inner psychophysical vitality as taught by the great Vajrasattva. The final three are the Mahayoga, Annuyoga and Atiyoga. These last three vehicles are specific to Nyingma tradition, whereas the first six are taught in all common schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

The Mahayoga focuses on the stage in which the ordinary perception and attachment are dissolved through sacred vision and divine pride. The Annuyoga is the completion stage of practice in which the body is used as a serviceable vehicle to actualise primordial awareness and the Atiyoga (Dzogchen), the final vehicle is believed to be where all emphasis is on the full completion practice which therefore enables the yogi to transcend all ordinary activities and time as taught by Samantabhadra Buddha.

The Last three Vehicles of Nyingma Atiyoga (Dzogchen), the highest teaching is divided in three stages: Semde, Longde and Mengakde. Semde translates as “mind division” and primarily focuses on discovering the true nature of the mind emphasising the innate awareness (rigpa) aspect of our natural state. Longde translates as “space division” or unconditioned space and emphasises the emptiness aspect of our natural state. Mengadke has two sequential parts, Trekchod meaning “cutting through” (typically taught) and also Thogal meaning “passing over the summit” or “direct crossing” which one of the main aims is to create flexibility in the mind. Trekchod is the process of cutting through discursive thought (the process of using reason and argument rather than intuition) at every level so that nothing but the illumined, non-dual buddha-nature remains in the end (this is often treated in the mind and space divisions). Trekchod is most often taught and practiced in the context of a guru yoga sadhana (as a disciple of a guru and usually belonging to a group), where it is no longer one's ordinary limited self that is practicing the meditation. This stage cannot be taught through texts and it is believed that only a teacher or guru can help guide the student from here. Thogal addresses what reality is like from the point of view of Trekchod and the non-dual awareness. It is therefore how reality manifests itself when one is resting in their primordial nature. Dzogchen is also referred to as the natural condition of every sentient being. It is through the practice of dzogchen men and women of extraordinary sanctity, compassion, and ability have been produced and among these are those who attain what is termed the “rainbow body”, (the metamorphous of the physical body at death into a state of rainbow light). It is believed that by the attainment of a rainbow body it becomes the direct means of being awakened in the state of enlightenment in this lifetime. .

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