

# The Three Lineage Transmissions in Dzogchen

Extract taken from 'The Happy Twins: Dzogchen and Mahamudra'<sup>1</sup>

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James Low

Transcribed by Jo Feat

Edited by Barbara Terris

1. Direct transmission of the buddha's mind, *gyal-wa gong gyud* [Tib. rGyal Ba dGongs brGyud].
2. Transmission to great meditators, (Rigdzin) using symbols, *rig-dzin da gyud* [Tib. Rig 'Dzin brDa brGyud].
3. Transmission to humans using language in the ear, *gang-zag nyen gyud* [Tib. Gang Zag sNyan brGyud].

We will take a little sidestep here to look at the three lineage transmissions in dzogchen.

The first is a direct transmission of the buddha's mind, this is *gyal-wa gong gyud* [Tib. rGyal Ba dGongs brGyud]. *Gong-wa* can mean thinking, but here it means immediate clarity of the buddhas as a lineage. That is to say, buddhas have an immediate sense of what is going on for each of them. They don't have to communicate it, it is communicated just by being present because they are all like an open mirror. The mirror is flickering and clear.

When that is presented to the great meditators – the rigdzin, those who abide in awareness – it is done symbolically and is called *rig-dzin da gyud* [Tib. Rig 'Dzin brDa brGyud]. That symbolic transmission could be using a peacock feather, a crystal, a particular mudra; it could be anything in

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<sup>1</sup>. Two texts were studied on this retreat. The Mirror of Luminous Revelation (from Nuden Dorje Drophan Lingpa) and The Mahamudra Middle Way of the Ganges (from Tilopa)

which the person 'gets it'. There is an immediacy in that. It is, however, a mediated immediacy because it is through the symbolic.

The first transmission, *gyal-wa gong gyud*, was through Samantabhadra to Vajrasattva. When Vajrasattva communicated with Garab Dorje he did it through symbol, *rig-dzin da gyud*. When Garab Dorje brought the teachings into the world and presented them particularly to Manjusrimitra he did it through language, which is the third transmission, *gang-zag nyen gyud* [Tib. Gang Zag sNyan brGyud]. This lineage goes through the ear hole of ordinary beings, and that is what we get, as it comes to us in words.

Now, as we know, words are very tricky and problematic. We understand worldly mudras, but transcendent mudras we didn't get, and that is why we have to have a lot of words. Through words we get the transmission, however what one person says and what the other person hears are not necessarily the same.

The meaning of a message is in what is received, not in what is sent. The sender knows what they are sending, the recipient gets what they receive, and they think that is what was sent. However that was not what was sent. My own teacher didn't speak very much and certainly not about dharma. He talked about a lot of other things, but in terms of dharma he didn't like to talk very much and when he did tell me things I didn't hear them. I heard something and then ten or twenty or thirty years later I started to hear what he said, because I had a lot of the five poisons' wax in my ears.

Everything I was hearing was mediated through my own habit formations, tendencies, and orientation. Gradually some of that cleared and I could actually hear what he said. I had heard something before, and then I remembered he told me that. I remember we looked at the texts and we did the translations and he explained that. I heard it, and yet I didn't hear it, because I heard my version of it.

That is why we spend quite a lot of time here going over the same things again and again — to give optimal opportunity to absorb what this is. Because if you really hear it and it comes through to you it is very straightforward and not at all complicated. But usually what comes in is mixed with the capacity that we have both to hear in the first place, and then to interpret and organise it. That is why this third lineage of transmission, *gang-zag nyen gyud*, is more problematic.

For example, there are a lot of symbolic moments (*rig-dzin da gyud*) in the Padmasambhava practice. Especially sound going into emptiness, or the three lights (white, red, blue), or when we do the Guru Yoga of the White Aa. That is a symbol formation wherein Aa is a symbol of emptiness. You open into that and you get something. If when we are all sitting together you find yourself in that state of openness even for a moment, then that is the first transmission, *gyal-wa gong gyud*.