

Albuquerque Karma Thegsum Chöling

Guide for New Students of Tibetan Buddhism

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This brief outline is intended to serve as a teaching guide and hand-out, to be used when introducing new students and visitors to the core philosophy and guiding principals of Buddhism.

Buddhism encourages:

- taking charge of one's own spiritual development
- virtuous and wholesome attitudes and behavior
- personal morality and ethics
- respect for all beings (including animals) and spiritual traditions
- self-liberation through spiritual training, using the Buddha's methods

THE BUDDHA taught that the cause of suffering is fixation on the self, leading to confusion, negative emotions, harmful habits, and negative karma. Because all beings have **Buddha nature**, they have the power to overcome self fixation, and therefore liberate themselves from suffering. This is accomplished through **meditation**, giving up negative behaviors (thoughts, words, actions), and adopting positive behaviors, especially **loving-kindness and compassion** for other beings. In Mahayana sects, including Tibetan sects, one adopts **Bodhicitta**, the commitment to **liberate all beings from suffering**.

Principal Buddhist Beliefs

- **Buddha nature** innate purity and wisdom of all beings
- **Rebirth (reincarnation)** the stream of conscious states, from one life to the next, driven by karma
- **Karma** law of cause and effect
- **Samsara** cycle of birth and death among six realms of existence
- **Universal suffering** all beings want lasting happiness, but experience suffering
- **Impermanence** mental and physical things are a source of **attachment**, but do not last

Principal Teachings of the Buddha

Four Noble Truths

1. truth of suffering
2. truth of origin of suffering
3. truth of cessation
4. truth of the path
5. -
6. -
7. -
8. -

Noble Eightfold Path (developing virtue)

- Right view
- Right intention
- Right speech
- Right action
- Right livelihood
- Right effort
- Right mindfulness
- Right concentration

Principal Methods used in Tibetan Buddhism

- **meditation** calming meditation and insight meditation
 - **virtuous living** reducing negative thoughts and actions, increasing positive ones
 - **liturgical practices** prayer, mantra recitation, visualization, and meditation (**sadhana** practice)
 - **mind training** techniques for weakening negative habits and strengthening positive habits
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Becoming a Buddhist

Prior to Taking Vows

- Self-Study of Buddhist philosophy (see book list)
- Compare different Buddhist sects
- Attend teachings with different Lamas
- Receive meditation instruction and try it for at least a few weeks
- Attend public sadhana practice (puja)
- visit several sanghas (Buddhist temples, churches) in your area, if possible
- talk to sangha members; get to know the sangha; if there is a resident **Lama**, ask to meet him/her

When you are sure you are ready:

- Choose a Buddhist sect
- Take refuge vows

If you choose a Mahayana sect:

- Take Bodhisattva vows (when you feel ready)
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What to do after taking refuge

- Establish a regular meditation routine at home
- Attend group sadhana practice
- Study mind training (Lojang)
- Take empowerments within your refuge lineage

Empowerments (Abhisheka)

Prior to Taking Empowerments	After receiving Empowerments
Self-study on the concept of Lineage Transmission Study the vows and conditions of Abhisheka Study the particular empowerment that is being offered	Practice with experienced sangha members Study the sadhana for the empowerment Develop a regular home sadhana practice

Ngöndro (pronounced: nehn-drō; often mispronounced as “noon-dro”)

Ngöndro is for experienced practitioners who wish to deepen their commitment to becoming a Bodhisattva. It involves 111,111 repetitions of five different practices, including full prostrations. It is generally best to complete several years of meditation, and other practices, before undertaking ngöndro.

Book List

The following books are recommended for learning about Buddhist philosophy, precepts, and methods.

Title	Author
Excellent at the Beginning	Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche
Dharma Paths	Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche
Heart of the Buddha	Chogyam Trungpa
Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness	Chogyam Trungpa
Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism	Chogyam Trungpa
Heart of the Buddha's Teaching	Thich Nhat Hanh
How to practice the way to a meaningful life	The Dalai Lama

Albuquerque KTC

Albuquerque KTC was established in 1982, and is an affiliate of **Karma Triyana Dharmachakra monastery**, located in Woodstock, NY. We follow the **Karma Kagyu** lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, a Mahayana sect of Buddhism. Our highest spiritual leader is **His Holiness, the 17th Karmapa**. You can learn about our center's lineage, practices, events, and monthly schedule here:

www.abqktc.org

The Karmapa and the Karma Kagyu Lineage

The following websites contain useful information about **His Holiness, the Karmapa**, and the **Karma Kagyu Lineage** (our lineage):

<http://the17thkarmapa.blogspot.tw>

<http://kagyuoffice.org>

Karma Triyana Dharmachakra

For information about our parent organization: <http://www.kagyu.org>

Definitions of Buddhist Terms

Sources: [Dharma Paths](#), by Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche (Snow Lion publications); [wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org) <http://en.wikipedia.org>

Bodhicitta The altruistic attitude of loving-kindness and compassion toward all beings. Also, the aspiration to attain enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings.

Bodhisattva A **Mahayana** practitioner who works for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Buddha (the historical Buddha)

A fully enlightened being. The Buddha of this era, Siddhartha Gautama, or Shakyamuni Buddha (c. 563 to 483 BCE), lived in India and founded the philosophy of Buddhism, which follows the middle-way, a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.

Buddha Nature The innate potential to attain enlightenment, which all sentient beings possess.

Dharma (Buddha Dharma) The teachings of the Buddha. Traditionally, it is said there are 84,000 teachings.

Enlightenment (Buddhahood)

Complete awakening of the mind. The gradual removal of all negative qualities and attainment of all positive qualities. Enlightenment is attained by following the path of **Buddha Dharma**. Traditionally, 10 stages (bhumis) are recognized for the path to enlightenment. Buddhahood is the ultimate, or 10th stage.

Four Noble Truths The first teaching of the Buddha, composed of:

1. The truth of suffering: all beings experience many forms of suffering
2. The truth of the origin of suffering: suffering arises from self fixation and associated causes
3. The truth of cessation of suffering: it is possible to overcome the causes of suffering
4. The truth of the path: the Buddhist practices and stages that lead to the end of suffering

Mahayana Buddhism

The “great vehicle” of the Buddhist path. The vehicle of **Bodhisattvas**, concerned with developing loving-kindness and compassion (**Bodhicitta**) toward limitless sentient beings, and realizing the emptiness and interdependence of the self and all phenomena.

Mind Training (Lojang)

The practice of replacing negative thoughts, habits, and tendencies with their positive opposites. The goal is to refine and purify one's motivations and attitudes. In Lojang, this is accomplished using a set of 59 helper aphorisms, or slogans, which one uses as reminders of what to do in specific situations of daily life. Examples include: “Be grateful to everyone”, “Don't wallow in self-pity”, and “Don't expect applause”.

Nobel Eight-Fold Path

A principal teaching of the Buddha, that describes a set of eight moral precepts and practices, which underlie the ethical conduct necessary for the attainment of **enlightenment**.

Puja A ritual ceremony, involving expressions of honor and devotion to the sources of refuge (generally, the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha). Typically involves meditation and recitation of a **sadhana**.

Sadhana A structured meditation practice of **Vajrayana**, with a liturgy, including visualizations, prayers, mantras, and silent meditation. During group practice, **sadhanas** are recited as part of a **puja**.

Vajrayana Also called Tantrayana. The most common form of Buddhism practiced in Tibet, which relies on tantric practices for support on the path to enlightenment.