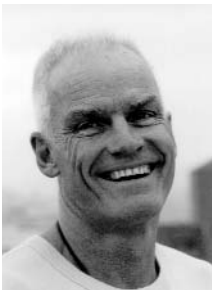


# Lama Ole Nydahl

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Lama Ole Nydahl is one of the few Westerners fully qualified as a lama and meditation teacher in the Karma Kagyu Buddhist tradition. In 1972, after completing three years of intensive meditation training, Lama Ole began teaching Buddhism in Europe at the request of the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, the spiritual head of the Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism. He has since transmitted the blessing of the lineage in a different city nearly every day, traveling and teaching worldwide as an authorized lama. His depth of knowledge and dynamic teachings inspire thousands of people at his lectures and retreats in North and South America, the UK, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Russia and Asia.

Lama Ole captivates his audience with charisma and joyfulness, and he challenges people's concepts of life and Buddhism in an unorthodox manner. He has been a major driving force in bringing Buddhism to the West, and to date has established more than four hundred Diamond Way Buddhist centers in forty-three countries around the world. His unique synthesis of modern style and ancient wisdom helped create the largest body of students practicing Diamond Way Buddhist methods in the West. Hannah Nydahl, his wife of more than thirty years, travels part of the time with Lama Ole, and spends the rest of her time translating for the highest lamas in the lineage.

The Nydahls' contact with Buddhism began in 1968 when Ole and Hannah went to Nepal on their honeymoon. There, they met their first teacher, Lopon Tsechu Rinpoche, who sent them to meet the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa. Hannah and Ole became the Karmapa's first Western students. Gyalwa Karmapa had a profound influence on their lives, and later recognized Lama Ole as a protector of the Karma Kagyu lineage. Between 1969 and 1972, Ole and Hannah studied under the direct guidance of the 16th Karmapa and received empowerments and instructions in Buddhist meditation practice and philosophy.

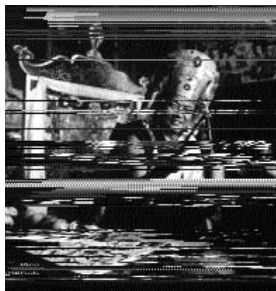
Lama Ole holds the transmission for a unique Diamond Way Buddhist practice called Phowa (conscious dying). Since 1987, he has taught this practice to over 50,000 people in retreats around the world.

Lama Ole Nydahl has given numerous print, television and radio interviews, and he is the author of several books translated into most major languages. His English titles include: *Entering the Diamond Way* (1985); *Ngondro* (1990); *Mahamudra* (1990); *Riding the Tiger* (1992); *The Nature of Mind* (1993); *The Way Things Are* (1996), Blue Dolphin Publishing, Inc. His next title to be published in English is *The Great Seal*.

[www.lama-ole-nydahl.org](http://www.lama-ole-nydahl.org) [www.diamondway.org](http://www.diamondway.org)

# Karma Kagyu Lineage

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The Karma Kagyu lineage is one of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism. It is a lineage of direct oral transmission from teacher to student, and treasures meditation and one's view in life as a means to attain enlightenment. The Karma Kagyu methods originate from the historical Buddha Shakyamuni and were given to his closest students. They were later passed on through the Indian Mahasiddhas: Tilopa, Naropa and Maitripa. After Muslim conquerors destroyed the Indian culture around 1,000AD, the teachings lived on through the famous Tibetan yogis Marpa and Milarepa. In the 12th century, Gampopa taught the first Gyalwa Karmapa, whose successive incarnations have kept these teachings alive.

The Gyalwa Karmapa is the head of the Karma Kagyu lineage. The Karmapa was the first recognized reincarnation in Tibetan history and is revered for his spiritual power throughout Tibet. Second to the Karmapa is the Shamarpa, who acts as the lineage holder between the Karmapa's incarnations. The Karmapas and the Shamarpas are known as the Black Hat and Red Hat Karmapas, and their minds are considered inseparable.

The 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, fled the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959 and thus secured the survival of the Karma Kagyu lineage. With the help of his Western students, he brought the unique teachings about the nature of mind to the West. He is legendary for his joyfulness, profound insight, and powerful presence.

The transmission of the lineage continues today with Gyalwa Karmapa Trinlay Thaye Dorje, who in 1994 at the age of ten, was recognized as the 17th Karmapa by Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche. In December 1999, he embarked on his first international teaching tour and gave initiations to over 15,000 of his students in Europe and Southeast Asia. In the summer of 2003 he conducted his first official program in the United States, giving empowerments and teachings in San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Los Angeles. The 17th Karmapa currently resides in India, where he continues his spiritual training and Western education.

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[www.karmapa.org](http://www.karmapa.org)  
[www.shamarpa.org](http://www.shamarpa.org)  
[www.diamondway.org](http://www.diamondway.org)

# Buddhism

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The historical Buddha Shakyamuni gave 84,000 teachings for people to reach enlightenment. His methods include meditation, the study of philosophy, psychology, skillful debate, and above all, the cultivation of a pure view in all situations. All Buddhist methods develop mind's inherent richness and clarity, enabling people of varying interests and abilities to avoid suffering and find lasting happiness.

In Buddhism, one distinguishes between three main "vehicles." They are: Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana or the Diamond Way.

Hinayana Buddhism places great importance on calming and focusing the mind. The goal is liberation from the suffering of conditioned existence or samsara. This occurs through realizing that the "self" has no lasting nature.

Without this understanding, liberation cannot be reached. This form of Buddhism emphasizes the avoidance of all harmful actions. The Hinayana took root predominately in Southern Asia and prevailed largely in monastic communities. Today, it is practiced by lay people as well.

Mahayana Buddhism or The Great Vehicle, is especially useful for people living full lives in society. It holds vast teachings on Buddhist philosophy and psychology, and aims for full enlightenment through the development of compassion and wisdom. One generates the bodhisattva attitude, the wish to benefit all beings, and recognizes the inherent "emptiness" of all outer and inner phenomena. The teachings explain that situations, thoughts and feelings change all the time, and thus, are ultimately empty of any lasting reality.

Zen Buddhism is related to the Great Vehicle. In the practice of Zen, one simplifies one's life, sits for long periods of time in a non-distracted state, and ponders paradoxical questions known as koans. These methods help to free mind from habitual intellectual tendencies and allow spontaneous insights to arise.

Vajrayana Buddhism or the Diamond Way is Buddha's ultimate teaching. By using methods with and without form, he initiated his students into the experience of their inherent Buddha nature. In Tibet, the Diamond Way was mainly transmitted through the "Red Hat" schools. In the Diamond Way, the teacher is the direct link to enlightenment, and is considered as important as the Buddha himself. The view is that all phenomena are inherently pure, and that enlightenment is our natural state. What makes Diamond Way unique is the variety of methods or "skillful means" to attain full enlightenment. The methods consist of the different levels of the Tantras, and of Mahamudra, The Great Seal. Through identification with one's own Buddha nature, both in meditation and in everyday life, realization unfolds effortlessly. Mind's potential expresses itself fully when there is no longer a separation between the perceiver, that which is perceived, and the perception itself.

Throughout history, Buddhism has influenced and become part of many different cultures. It is currently developing and making its mark in the West, proving its timeless relevance. The late Bhutanese meditation master, Lopon Tsechu Rinpoche said, "In each culture, the teachings of the Buddha find the form that best suits them. You can compare it to a raw diamond: on red cloth it shines red, on a blue cloth it looks blue. Regardless, the diamond stays the same."

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# Controversy in the Lineage



Trinlay Thaye Dorje recognized as the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa by Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche



Ugyen Trinley recognized by Tai Situ Rinpoche, the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Communist Government

Since 1992, the Karma Kagyu lineage has been embroiled in a controversy. The conflict arose after a young nomad boy, Ugyen Trinley, was proclaimed the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa, head of the Karma Kagyu lineage by Tai Situ Rinpoche. Traditionally, before they die, the Karmapas leave specific instructions detailing their future rebirth, which is unique among all incarnate Buddhist lamas. After the 16th Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje died in 1981, the entire Kagyu world awaited word of his reincarnation.

In 1992, Situ Rinpoche, officially the third ranking lama in the lineage, presented a letter to fellow Kagyu lamas that he claimed was the "prediction letter" of the 16th Karmapa. Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche, the second ranking lama in the lineage rejected the authenticity of that letter, and insisted the document undergo a forensic examination. His demands were disregarded, particularly after the Dalai Lama, against historic tradition, involved himself in the matter and gave his recognition to the candidate. The Chinese Communist Government also gave its full backing to Tai Situ Rinpoche's candidate and proclaimed the boy to be a "living buddha." China's recognition of Ugyen Trinley represented an about face in its policy of not recognizing the reincarnations of Buddhist lamas. Based on the disputed prediction letter, the young boy, Ugyen Trinley was enthroned in Tibet/China. The enthronement took place without the seal of approval of Shamar Rinpoche, who has repeatedly pointed out the improprieties in the case and urged the Dalai Lama to stay out of what is strictly a Kagyu issue.

In 1994, in accordance with Kagyu tradition, Shamar Rinpoche found and recognized Trinlay Thaye Dorje and proclaimed him the rightful 17th Karmapa. Trinlay Thaye Dorje is supported by many high ranking Kagyu lamas, hundreds of Diamond Way Buddhist centers, as well as by a large number of traditional Kagyu centers and monasteries in Asia.

To this day, few members of the media have explored the complex issue of Tibetan politics that led to this turbulent and often violent controversy. As a result of receiving the Dalai Lama's stamp of authenticity, much of the Buddhist world has been led to believe that Ugyen Trinley is the sole and legitimate Karmapa. In fact, the Dalai Lamas have never held any right over the confirmation, or recognition, of a Karmapa at any time throughout history. Indeed, the Karmapa line precedes that of the Dalai Lamas by more than three hundred years and their lineages are and always have been entirely separate.

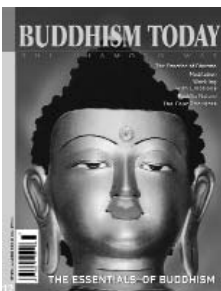
To date, no forensic examination of the letter in question has taken place, despite repeated calls by Shamar Rinpoche, Lama Ole Nydahl and others.

[www.karmapa-issue.org](http://www.karmapa-issue.org)

Karmapa Papers: published 1992 - available through DWBC: [books@diamondway.org](mailto:books@diamondway.org)

Rogues in Robes: by Tomek Lehnert, Blue Dolphin Publishing 1998.

# Diamond Way Buddhism in the USA



Lama Ole Nydahl founded and currently directs more than four hundred Diamond Way Karma Kagyu Buddhist groups and centers worldwide. All the centers are under the spiritual guidance of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa, Trinlay Thaye Dorje. There are currently twenty-eight centers in the United States, which operate under Diamond Way Buddhist Centers, USA, a non-profit religious corporation.

The people running the centers and taking part in the centers' activities are lay Buddhist practitioners. They work full-time jobs, while integrating Diamond Way teachings and meditation into their daily lives. Members share responsibility for guiding group meditations, answering questions, and giving explanations about Buddhism; their work is unpaid, and based on idealism and friendship.

The main practice in all the Diamond Way Buddhist Centers is the Guru Yoga meditation on the 16th Karmapa. This meditation is guided in English, uses visualization and mantra recitation, and lasts about thirty minutes. There is a relaxed social atmosphere in the centers, questions are encouraged, and practitioners share readings, teachings and dharma videos. These weekly meditation evenings are open to the public and are free of charge.

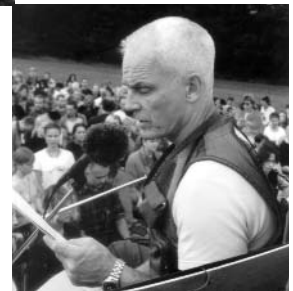
Diamond Way centers work together to organize retreats, lectures and workshops throughout the year. Lama Ole Nydahl guides several annual retreats within the U.S. including: Phowa (Conscious Dying), Meditation, Mahamudra (The Great Seal), and Ngondro (The Foundational Practices). In addition, other traveling lay teachers regularly provide explanations and give lectures and workshops in the centers.

The centers are financed mainly with the help of voluntary membership contributions. All surplus from courses and public lectures is used for Buddhist projects in the United States and around the world.

Diamond Way Buddhist Centers, USA publishes Buddhism Today, an international magazine. It presents information that is relevant to lay people in Western society.

[www.diamondway.org](http://www.diamondway.org)  
[www.Buddhism-Today.org](http://www.Buddhism-Today.org)

# Phowa-The Practice of Conscious Dying

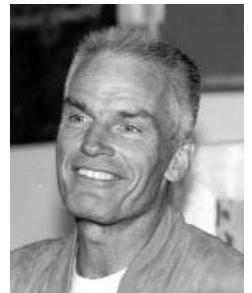
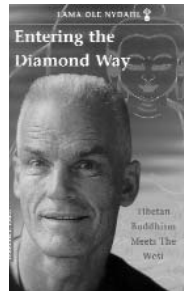


One of Lama Ole Nydahl's areas of expertise is teaching Phowa (the Practice of Conscious Dying). This practice is the last of the Six Yogas (energy teachings) of Naropa, and is one of the most profound teachings in Tibetan Buddhism. The goal of the Phowa is to learn to transfer the consciousness at the moment of death to a state of highest bliss. Lama Ole is one of the few Buddhist lamas empowered to teach the Phowa practice. Since 1987, he has taught Phowa to over 50,000 people at more than 150 meditation courses around the world.

The practice of Phowa is a very direct method involving visualization and mantra. This intensive instruction usually takes about five days in a retreat setting, and brings about physical and mental transformations by opening the central energy channel in the body. Phowa is not only of great benefit at the time of death, but also provides inner confidence in daily life. Those who have completed the retreat report that the fear of death dissolves and fears in life diminish. The practice also includes methods to help others at their time of death.

[www.lama-ole-nydahl.org](http://www.lama-ole-nydahl.org)  
[www.diamondway.org](http://www.diamondway.org)

# Publications & Videos/CDs



## Publications

***Entering the Diamond Way*** (1999) 2nd edition (first published in 1985) ISBN 0-931892-03-1  
The story and spiritual odyssey of Ole and Hannah Nydahl who in 1969 became the first Western students of the great Tibetan master, the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa.

***The Way Things Are*** (1996) ISBN 0-931892-38-4  
More than a Buddhist textbook, *The Way Things Are* is a living transmission of Buddha's deep wisdom, given by a Western Buddhist master.

***The Nature of Mind*** (1993) ISBN 0-931892-58-9  
In this basic introduction to Buddhism, Lama Ole offers a way to integrate compassion and wisdom in daily life.

***Riding the Tiger*** (1992) ISBN 0-931892-67-8  
The inside story of the development of Tibetan Buddhism in the West

***Mahamudra*** (1990) ISBN 0-931892-69-4  
A commentary on the 14th century wishing prayer for the attainment of ultimate insight into the nature of reality. This Mahamudra prayer was composed by the third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje, (1284-1339).

***Ngondro*** (1990) ISBN 0-931892-23-6  
Ngondro means "something which precedes," and are the preliminary practices in Tibetan Buddhism. In a direct and very practical way, Lama Ole explains these methods that help to purify negativity and the accumulate merit and wisdom. They bring forth mind's fullest potential, while removing the veils which keep us from experiencing and expressing our enlightened nature.

*Next to be published*  
***The Great Seal***

## Videos Audio CDs & DVDs

Six twenty-five minute teachings on important Buddhist topics:

Cause & Effect	Mahamudra
Teacher & Student	Relationships
Death and Rebirth	Meditation

[www.lama-ole-nydahl.org](http://www.lama-ole-nydahl.org) [www.diamondway.org](http://www.diamondway.org)

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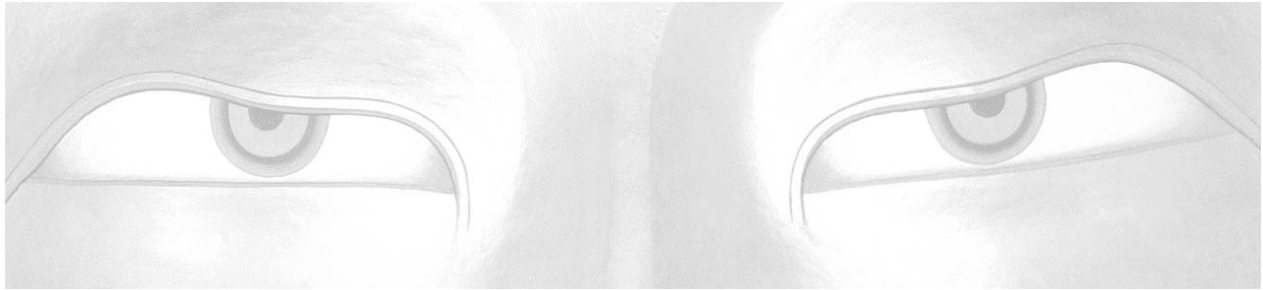
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For a complete list of centers worldwide - [www.diamondway.org](http://www.diamondway.org)



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