

2. The Book of Kadam: The Core Texts

Attributed to Atisha Dīpamkara (982-1054) and Dromtönpa (1005-1064)

Translated by Thupten Jinpa

The Kadam School, which emerged from the teachings of the Indian master Atisha and his principal student Dromtönpa, is revered for its unique practical application of the bodhisattva's altruistic ideal in day-to-day life. Tibetan historians identify three principal lineages in the Kadam teachings – (1) the Kadam lineage of the great treatises, (2) the Kadam lineage of instructions as embodied in the mind training texts, and (3) the Kadam lineage of oral transmissions, especially those enshrined in two-volume Book of Kadam. The texts contained in the present volume represent the core texts of The Book of Kadam, especially the twenty-three chapter dialogue between Atisha and his principal student Dromtönpa woven around Atisha's seminal work Bodhisattva's Jewel Garland. Sometimes referred to also as the "Kadam emanation scripture," this work is undisputedly one of the greatest spiritual works of Tibetan Buddhism. Our volume contains (i) Atisha's root text of Jewel Garland, (ii) the twenty-three chapters of the Jewel Garland of Dialogues, (iii) Dromtönpa's Self-Exhortation, (iv) Guide to the Practice of Sixteen Drops, (v) four selected chapters from Dromtönpa's birth stories, (vi) two short versified summaries of The Book of Kadam, one by the second Dalai Lama (1476-1542) and the other by Yongzin Yeshé Gyaltzen (1713-93), and (vii) The Sayings of the Kadam Master compiled by Chegom Sherap Dorjé (circa twelfth century). Although the Kadam School no longer exists as an autonomous lineage within Tibetan Buddhism today, its teachings have become fully incorporated into the teachings of all four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism, especially the Geluk School.

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