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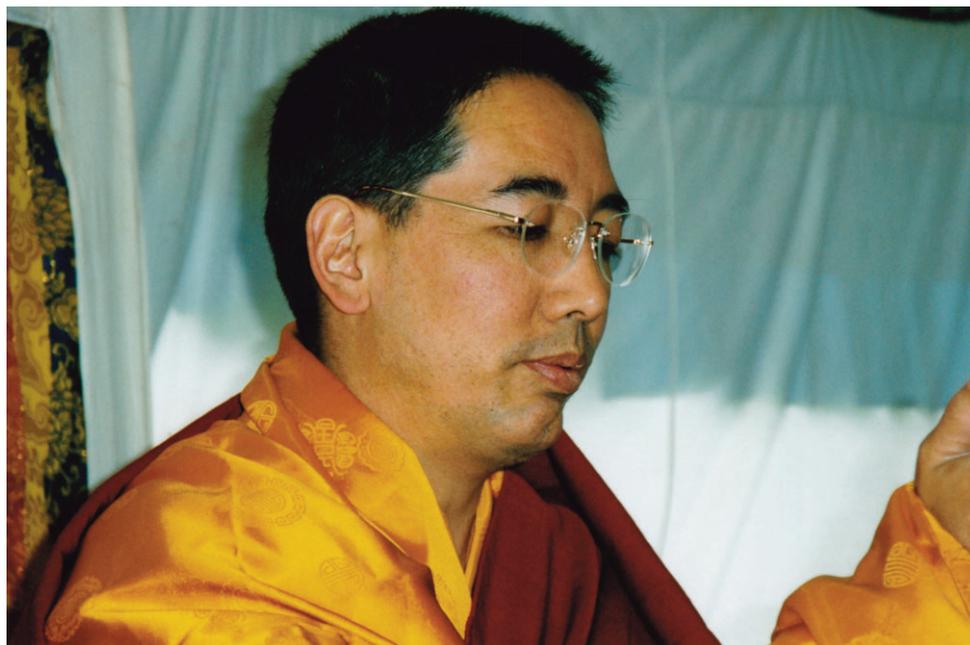
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## Essence of Mahamudra

Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche



*This is the 2nd in a series of 4 talks on Mahamudra Meditation in Sydney in 2009. The next two talks will feature in consecutive E-Vam newsletters.*

In the first talk, I gave some history about how many of the tantric teachings were brought to Tibet after King Langdarma's time. Dzogchen from the Nyingma school came to Tibet first, roughly around the beginning of the 9th century. After King Langdarma's demise, a new wave of teachings came to Tibet. The teachings on Mahamudra are similar to Dzogchen but are actually associated with this new wave of Tantric teachings, the newer form of Buddhism that was introduced to Tibet.

There was also political unrest in India at the time. North-western India was always vulnerable to invasion. At that time, many Indian masters found safe refuge in Nepal and Tibet and surrounding areas. Nalanda and many other Buddhist universities that housed thousands of students were destroyed. These newer forms of Tantricism that were brought to Tibet contained many

different teachings and practices including Mahamudra.

Mahamudra teachings are quite different from standard tantric practices or teachings which emphasise the notion of transformation – where one visualises oneself as a deity and establishes an intimate relationship with the deity, one's personal deity.

There is tension in the tantric system in terms of two different kinds of approaches. One is the aspect of relationship with the deity. The other one is about going deeper into oneself, and the aspect of dissolution. That is, the dissolution of different elements, working with the psychophysical energy centres and pathways.

So where is the tension? The tension is there because when you are doing the first practice, you are working with the idea of energy extending outside of oneself. This is

imagined and experienced through the use of thoughts – creating more thoughts, images, and emotions. The second aspect is withdrawing or drawing inwards. The first part of the practice is spreading, going out; the second part of the practice is about drawing in. In Tantricism, one is generating these two aspect all the time, doing both.

### OUTWARD ENERGY

In the first, you visualise deities and mandalas and associated entourage and other symbolic details associated with the main deity. It is a sort of psychic centrifugal - moving away from the centre; and centripetal – moving toward the centre – idea. One is the idea of expanding and in order to do this, one generates more thoughts. In Tantricism everything is used for one's transformation including thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Even if you don't have many thoughts, you endeavour to create them. One cannot generate an image of a deity if one is not thinking.

It is not to just visualise the deity without any feelings. One should also generate the appropriate feelings associated with that particular deity. Depending on the qualities of the deity, if the deity looks very wrathful, seductive, or compassionate, one brings these feelings and emotions to the fore. That is one aspect of the process of generating energy to expand outward.

### WITHDRAWING

The other aspect is the idea of withdrawing, which you do with the practice of chakras, the psychophysical energy centres; *nadi*, the psychophysical energy pathways; *prana*, being psychophysical energy; and *bindu*, which I refer to as "life essence." These are some of the standard aspects of tantric teachings and practices brought to Tibet after King Langdarma's death. Teachings based on

*Guhyasamaja-tantra*, for example, and *Kalachakra*, *Chakrasamvara* and so on. They all have this same idea and approach.

The teachings on Mahamudra were also brought there by the same people. In our lineage, we say that Marpa went to India several times and received the teachings from Naropa. Naropa had received them from Tilopa and so forth. The notion of

transmission is very important, both in Tantricism and in the Mahamudra lineage. So there is that element of centrifugal and centripetal movement.

In contrast to these types of tantric practices, Mahamudra practice involves shamatha – tranquility meditation and vipashyana – analytical meditation. These are associated with standard Buddhist practice. However the notion of transmission is still important. Transmission, as I mentioned in the first talk, is also important in Zen Buddhism. Many people in the west think of Zen as being very iconoclastic but in fact it still emphasises the notion of transmission. The same is true in Mahamudra teachings and practices.

**“Accepting ourselves with a deep sense of self-worth, and self-worthiness comes from accepting our true state of being within which we find our fullest capacity and greatest perfection as human beings. Then we have true self-acceptance.”**

### GROUND, PATH, AND FRUITION MAHAMUDRA

When we come to Mahamudra teachings themselves, we have to think of Mahamudra in relation to what we call Ground, Path, and Fruition Mahamudra – *Gzhi lam dre bu* is the shortened version in Tibetan. *Gzhi* means the ground; *lam* means the path; *dre bu* means the fruition. The early lineage masters passed on these teachings of Ground Mahamudra, Path Mahamudra, and Fruition Mahamudra - from Tilopa to Naropa, Naropa to Marpa, Marpa to Milarepa, and so on.

### GROUND MAHAMUDRA

Ground Mahamudra refers to our state of being, the way we are now. Human beings are always thinking about where we are now and where we want to be in the future. When we embark on the spiritual path, these ideas still come into play because we still want to know how to become whatever it is we are aspiring to, in relation to who we are, what we are, and so on.

In most religious and spiritual traditions, even mystical traditions, the

idea is that where we are now is flawed. Our human condition is seen as corrupted, polluted, imperfect, contaminated, and stained in some way. Where we want to go, what we need to attain, is radically different to where we are now; it is something perfect, and stands in stark contrast to our present state of being.

Teachings like Mahamudra say something different while not ignoring the fact that we are flawed individuals: we have many problems, each one of us. According to Buddhism, we are wandering in the samsara, the cyclic state. We are pushed and pulled by varieties of arising influences and forces including deluded thoughts, confused emotions,

and uncontrolled, unrestrained feelings.

While that is true enough, nevertheless, Mahamudra teachings say we should not put all our focus on such influences because fundamentally, we are not flawed. We have problems and disturbing emotions and are confused about varieties of things in life but that does not mean that we are evil or that actually, in terms of our true condition, our own real nature, there is something wrong with us.

That is how we begin with the idea of developing some understanding of Ground Mahamudra. Understanding ourselves in that way is to understand Ground Mahamudra. If we think like that, then when we meditate, we will have more confidence in ourselves. When we meditate and disturbing thoughts and emotions and so on arise, we would not be thinking: "Oh, here I go again. I'm such a stupid person. I'm such an emotional wreck. I'm this, I'm that." Self-chastising and beating ourselves up can be like using meditation as an exercise in self-punishment.

Equally one doesn't have to think that "I'm this wonderful person." We do not need to see ourselves as perfect either;

neither perfect nor hopeless. Usually, most of us go from one extreme to the other. Some people always think they are the worst person on the planet and others think they are God's gift to humanity, but most of us just swing from one to the other. Some days when things are going well, we think: "I'm good, I'm great." When things are going badly, we can start thinking: "I'm the worst. I'm no good."

This happens even in meditation. When we feel good, our meditation goes well and we feel good, even thinking: "Oh, at least I must have attained the first level of bodhisattva." And then next time you're thinking: "I'm still just a beginner. I haven't made any progress whatsoever."

That's why in Mahamudra, it says that we should try to develop confidence and certainty about our own true state of being. In Wangchuk Dorje's standard manual called *Ocean of Certainty*, he refers to one's own original state, one's authentic state of being. If we had certainty in our authentic state of being, then our confidence would be lifted and therefore when we meditated, we may have less of the ups and downs. So when bad thoughts arise or strong emotions flood through our mind, our confidence is not shaken.

If a strong feeling or emotion arises in meditation, we do not have to rush to think: "I am this type of person or that type of person." We can tend to rush to too much identification in terms of our egoic identity: "I am anxious," "I am sad," "I am depressed," or whatever experiences it might be. We can rush to attach it to our identity.

If we have a better understanding of ourselves in terms of our genuine, authentic state of being, if we have that certainty, then such things as depression may arise. It doesn't mean that if you do Mahamudra meditation practice that depression or disturbing emotions will suddenly disappear. What it means is one is in a better position to deal with

depression, fear, anxiety, worry, and other such experiences. It will not be seen as defining you.

The point is when we have some kind of genuine sense of self-acceptance, acceptance of our authentic state of being which comes from understanding Ground Mahamudra, then what we find unmanageable can become manageable. They are not so overwhelming then. If we do not have that fundamental sense of

Not only would other human beings not find us acceptable, but that even God would judge us harshly.

The Mahamudra ground or view is a very balanced way of looking at our whole situation. It is not saying that human nature is good; or that human beings are just good by nature. That's a very idealistic way of looking at things because if human beings were very good by nature, then we wouldn't be where we are. We would be living in peace and harmony and everybody would be getting along.

That is not how things are because human beings have strong emotions and can be very possessive. In Buddhism, the human realm is known as the realm of desire, *kamadhatu*.

So obviously there are problems. If we were perfect, we wouldn't need religion, spirituality, or meditation. We would not need any of these things. We need them precisely because we are not perfect. On the other hand, to then say: "I'm just completely flawed. I have so many defects. I've got nothing, no redeeming features at all" - that is going to the other extreme.

So when it is said that our true nature is untainted, I think we have to understand it in that sense. Our true nature, our authentic state of being is unstained. That does not mean that we are perfect. I think it's very important to understand it that way. To say that in myself I'm not corrupted, not deeply

flawed in any way but I do have flaws, I do have defects and issues and problems and whatnot - that's a very, very powerful concept, in fact.

What that means is that not only can our afflictions be worked with, but also we can understand how that is possible. Not only because we have meditation technique, but because *fundamentally* our authentic state is not flawed. So whatever problems you have can be fixed because in yourself you are not fundamentally corrupted, bad, or sinful or whatever the case might be.



Tilopa

understanding our own authentic state, then as Buddhism teaches, we get tossed about on the ocean of samsara. Another metaphor used is we get tossed about like a boat without a rudder.

That's why the Mahamudra type of teachings is very important. Often, when we follow a spiritual path, we know that it gives us meaning in life. It can be very fruitful and meaningful, but often at the same time, we may feel like we are being told we are bad because we create too much bad karma or because we are sinful.

So we acknowledge our own issues and problems. If we do not work with our issues, then we are not going to improve.

When it comes to self-acceptance in Mahamudra, it does not mean just “self-acceptance,” or “I accept myself as I am.” Self-acceptance in this sense means accepting our own true nature, our own true authentic state of being, our primordial self; the self we do not know so well. It does not mean: “Yeah, I’m an aggressive person and that’s OK.” That’s not what self-acceptance means in this context.

**T**his is a very profound distinction. A lot of things are said about self-acceptance but from the Mahamudra perspective, self-acceptance does not mean: I just accept myself as I am and so there is no need for change. That’s a ludicrous idea, and how can we possibly do that? Accepting ourselves with a deep sense of self-worth, and self-worthiness comes from accepting our true state of being within which we find our fullest capacity and greatest perfection as human beings. Then we have true self-acceptance.

Superficial self-acceptance is not going to work for us within our own eyes and that of others. Others may not see us as acceptable and this type of superficiality can create conflict between people, particularly if we have no impetus for improvement and change. The idea of a true state of fundamental richness is really powerful because then we would feel a real sense of self-confidence, a real sense of self-worthiness. Otherwise, our self-acceptance is manufactured and when the next major catastrophe happens or we encounter some crisis, our confidence can crumble and self-confidence can disappear in a flash.

So we need to think of Ground Mahamudra in that sense. The Ground Mahamudra is what grounds us, what should provide us with a solid basis or foundation to stand on so that whatever life events we encounter - all the different kinds of situations and problems we may have to deal with on a daily basis - will not throw us off-balance. That’s what we should be focusing on when we are doing Mahamudra meditation practice.

In Mahamudra meditation, there is a lot of emphasis placed on what is called

“resting in the natural state,” “letting the mind be,” and so on. That is to rest in an uncontrived way accepting this notion of our true fundamental untainted state of richness and worthiness. How do we know that our true nature is uncorrupted and untainted? When beginning this practice, we have to take it on faith really. We do perhaps have an underlying belief that we have greater depth and greater potentialities than we can easily access or express. So we begin with faith in an authentic state of being. With the use of reasoning and contemplation, we can develop more understanding. We ultimately have faith in our belief in our authentic state because we are samsaric beings – confused and deluded – so we cannot expect to understand what we

fundamentally incorruptible.”

Having that belief, having that trust, then gives us the confidence and impetus needed for our meditation practice. If we already know our authentic self, we don’t need that trust. The trust in one’s own authentic state of being is important and necessary.

### THREE ASPECTS OF GROUND MAHAMUDRA

In brief, Ground Mahamudra is described as having three aspects, three qualities – nature, essence, and characteristic. In Dzogchen teachings, for example, the last one is called “compassion” or “responsiveness” but in Mahamudra it is often translated as “characteristic.”

**“Many things we can understand through the use of language and concepts and ideas and whatnot but there are other things that we just have to learn to understand intuitively, for want of a better expression. Our authentic state of being is a case in point.”**

don’t yet understand about ourselves. It becomes quite illogical.

Our real understanding comes through our experience. The experience will validate our presumption, assumption, or beliefs in an authentic and untainted state. This is also a very important point in relation to trust. Interestingly, trust is almost always not based on knowledge. We actually don’t trust something that we already know. We trust something that we don’t know. For whatever reason, we believe our trust is well-placed and will lead to very good things.

In everyday life, we use trust in this way all the time, with all kinds of things, without knowing very much about what we have trust in. Having trust in one’s own authentic state of being is also like that. It is not because we already understand our authentic state of being. But due to our assumptions and beliefs, the authentic state of being is for us something real, something true. We don’t know that for certain, but we trust that: “In myself, in my authentic state of being I am untainted, uncorrupted and this state is

### NATURE

Nature is said to be the ground. Our own true nature is said to have the quality of being empty, emptiness, reality. What does that mean? That means, unlike our self-created egoic identity – “I am Samantha. I’m a doctor” or “I am Paul and I am a truck-driver” – when we think about developing this trust in our own authentic state of being, we don’t have to think of being in a particular way. The moment we try to say what this authentic state of being is, we have missed the point. We have injected some contrivances or related it to some sense of self-identity. The whole point of this approach to our meditation practice is to rest and just allow ourselves to *be* in the natural state, not conceptualising and saying what this authentic state of being is etc. With that type of conceptual activity, we are actually trying to grasp at some *idea* of the authentic state of being rather than resting within it.

So not doing that, trying to refrain from such grasping onto such ideas would help us to understand what is meant by the

*nature* is emptiness. So don't try to grasp at anything in terms of the concept of being in the authentic state of being. "What is this authentic state of being? How do I define it? How do I pin it down? How can I grasp this idea?" Our tendency is to lose the point through grasping and over thinking. Our mind has the tendency to always grasp and try to pin something down, to define with precision so that we can understand.

What Mahamudra teachings say is that there is another way to understand which is more intuitive, where certain things do not have to be defined because they cannot be put into words, but they can be felt, experienced. That is what one has to understand and that is how one should try to understand. Many things we can understand through the use of language and concepts and ideas and whatnot but there are other things that we just have to learn to understand intuitively, for want of a better expression. Our authentic state of being is a case in point.

So to understand emptiness, we try not to think of one's own authentic state of being as something, as opposed to something else. For example, the authentic state of being is not the opposite of non-being. Conceptually, in our mind, we may start to think that the authentic state of being is a way of being, as if it is the opposite of non-being – and that, again, is to lose the *nature*.

#### ESSENCE

In the teachings, it is said that Essence is luminosity or clarity. "Luminosity" means that in our true state of being, we are

actually awake, we are aware. There is a sense of intrinsic awareness, which is like the capacity to be aware of all things, aware of the *nature* of all things, not necessarily aware of any particular thing. Due to this intrinsic awareness, our ordinary conscious mind operates so that we can actually use our senses and our so-called conscious mind. We can think and feel and anticipate and remember and do all this because we have that intrinsic awareness.

Intrinsic awareness itself is not aware of any particular thing. It is like the capacity for the electricity to illuminate but it depends on the conduit; the conduit would determine how the light comes on. Really, electricity, the energy, is like intrinsic awareness but the manner in which that becomes manifest is different. So the essence of the mind, the essence of our true authentic state is described as having a luminous quality which is called "intrinsic awareness," "primordial wisdom," "Buddha-nature," "Dharmakaya." All kinds of words are used, but it means the same.

So these two are the fundamental qualities associated with one's own authentic state: emptiness and luminosity.

#### CHARACTERISTIC

The third one is the characteristic of the mind, which refers to our normal mind, the mind that we use every day, the mind that thinks, anticipates, remembers, that can become fearful, anxious, worried and also, when the mind is blissful, in a contemplative state, attaining various levels of a meditative state, attaining various levels of enlightenment. All that is

called the "characteristic" of the mind.

Enlightenment is not just a fixed state. As it is said in the teachings, we should think of both samsaric and nirvanic experiences in relation to this third aspect of our authentic state of being, *characteristic*.

What that means is that we should not think of the authentic state of being as being something separate, divorced from all our normal experiences, because our normal experiences originate from our authentic state of being. That does not mean that our authentic state of being causes normal experiences to arise. There's a big difference between "arising from" and being "caused by." As with clouds in the sky, clouds appear in the sky but the sky does not cause the clouds to appear. So it is that same kind of idea.

In this way, we can develop a way to understand things in a non-dualistic fashion. As you know, in Buddhism, seeing things in a non-dualistic way is the gateway to developing wisdom while thinking dualistically leads to ignorance and confusion. All that we experience, both samsaric and nirvanic experiences, arise from the original state of being.

It is important to understand that Ground Mahamudra has those three aspects. Mahamudra itself basically means the "unitive state of being," so the three, the nature, essence, and characteristic, are not seen as separate. Mahamudra means that – Maha means "great"; mudra means "seal." Our state of being is sealed with the true nature of reality. That's what it means. ■

## MEMORIAL TRIBUTE – TRALEG IX RINPOCHE

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*Through the gateless gate the Dharma king of Vajra-dhatu returns home.*

*The gate keeper humbly welcomes and receives a dorjebell.*

*Hardly noticed is the black bird flying over a dark night sky last eight years.*

*His wondrous teaching brings dharma joy and contentment to all faithful.*



*Humbly,  
Monk Ekai*



# Interview with Do Tulku, the 6th Raktrul Rinpoche

Matthew Dawson



**Matthew Dawson:** Hello Rinpoche, thanks so much for taking the time to do this interview.

**Do Tulku:** First of all, Tashi Delek, you're welcome, and thank you for inviting me.

**Matthew:** Do Rinpoche is currently teaching at E-Vam Institute in Melbourne. For those who don't know, might you like to say something about your lineage and the particular tradition that you are part of?

**Do Tulku:** I belong to the Sakya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. My monasteries and the previous lineage, as in the tulku lineage, is the lineage of Raktruls. I have the name of the sixth Raktrul, so I'm supposed to be the sixth Raktrul. Up until 1958, five Raktrul's have appeared and lived in Tibet, one after another, and they were very discreet masters. Some of them spent their whole life in retreat in caves. There is a saying around my monastery that you can see a Raktrul once every three years. So it seems they used to do a lot of practice. And they were really quite okay practitioners. So as per lineage, that is that. Now it's just me (laughs). And, yes, I don't think there is much to say. Except that, I now belong to the Sakya tradition. And although I'm barely being counted as one

because the tradition and practice is so profound and far reaching, and I can barely keep up with my daily practices. But that is that (laughs).

**Matthew:** I was told by someone in the Evam Sangha that there might be a connection with Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX. Can Rinpoche tell us about this connection?

**Do Tulku:** I told this story when I was talking with Traleg Rinpoche's sangha last month. The mother of my wife wanted to have a Dharma center in Germany. And Traleg Rinpoche IX used to come to Germany at their request and talk to people there. So then she thought, "Okay, now I want to have a proper Dharma centre" and she had some ideas about what the centre could be and so on. And he said, "Well, that's a really good idea, do that." And she asked Traleg Rinpoche, "What should we name the centre?" and he gave a very strange name for a center. He said, "Pema Dorje is a good name." And at that time, I had no connection with the family. I didn't know Rebecca (my wife) then. And 'Pema Dorje' is actually a person's name. Usually you don't give a person's name to a place, like a Dharma center. And that is actually my

name. So later, years after I met Rebecca and finally we thought, "Okay, maybe I should come to Germany" they found out that my real name is Pema Dorje and they were very excited. They thought, "Oh, this is almost like Rinpoche giving a prophecy." Like, "Oh, yeah, you knew this guy will come." They consider it like that. And I thought it is kind of interesting and funny, actually. Because like I said, it's a person's name, you know? I wish I could have known Rinpoche when I was recognized. But I didn't have the good fortune to meet him in person and neither did my mother.

**Matthew:** So just to clarify, the name of the center is Pema Dorje and your name is also Pema Dorje?

**Do Tulku:** Yeah, that is my name (laughs). It's a funny name. I actually had a name, well, since you asked me – I really have nothing useful to say, so I just tell these stories. I almost died when I was six months old. Before that I had another name that we got from His Holiness Dalai Lama's office, as every Tibetan kid does. Then I had a very bad ear infection and with another disease I almost died. So then we had this Nyingma Lama who was sort of like a Village Lama type, quite a decent guy actually. And he said, "Oh, the boy's name has to be changed or else he will most likely not survive". So they changed my name. He said, "Okay, so Pema Dorje is his name." This name is actually Padmasambhava's name. So I think he thought, "This is the blessing of Padmasambhava so that he might live". So then that became my actual name. They then changed my name on my birth certificate (laughs). My mother believes that saved my life.

**Matthew:** You have been teaching the text *The Way of the Bodhisattva* online at E-Vam these last two months. Would you like to say something about the importance of this text? And why you see it as an important text to study at this time?

**Do Tulku:** The importance of this text is

that it's just so wholesome and perfect from every angle possible. Sometimes you have a really beneficial text but an extremely ordinary almost mundane teacher. And sometimes you have a really realized master but very weird text (laughs). I mean you have the blessings but you read it but it doesn't really enter your being. This one has all the qualities of an authentic practice manual so to speak. Only rarely has there ever been a text like this that appeals to all walks of spiritual life. For instance, if you are a scholarly type, there is just so much that these texts offer that you will not find in any other Buddhist texts, maybe in the sutras of the Buddha, but there it is very scattered throughout the Sutras. So it delights scholars. Especially when you go through Shantideva's explanation of how to generate tolerance. That's really... I've never seen anything like that. Just the simple things. Because usually we hear things like, "Oh anger is bad" and "don't be angry". Well yes, but how? (laughs). And, of course, we're given the antidote, like meditate on compassion, and that's good. That's very good, actually. But he goes a few steps further. And he says, "Well, you have to recognize before anger arises." And he says things like, "Before anger comes, you will feel discomfort, there will be a sort of discomfort." And that sort of thing. So you see these things he does, it may seem like a small detail, but it makes a world of difference. And actually, it's not a small detail. But he just throws it out there, in beautiful poetic verses. And so for a scholar, if you go into the eighth chapter or ninth chapter, it's just... it completely opens your mind.

Then, if you're a practitioner, from the very first chapter he tells you how great bodhichitta is. Then in the second and third chapters he prepares you to take bodhichitta and then you take bodhichitta. And then the fourth and fifth chapters he teaches you how to protect bodhichitta. And this is just... it's unparalleled. And Tibetan masters, to show the importance of a text, say, "Even if the entire Buddhadharmas is gone, if this text is remaining, you can say the Dharma is remaining." They always say this. But in this case it's true! It is not just to highlight the greatness of a text. But it really is a great

text. So yes, it really delights practitioners too.

And then for beginners, like us, who are a little bit scholarly, a little bit into practice (laughs), I think this is a really great text.

And also Shantideva himself was an extraordinary being. We have different accounts. Three different biographical accounts. But one thing common among all these accounts is that he was extremely humble and yet he was non-negotiable when it comes to the practice of Dharma. He also lived his life as a carefree yogi to the extent that we don't really have a list of his students, so to speak (laughs). He just went around, and whoever comes in front of him gets the teaching (laughs) and that's it. So yes, that was a very long answer, apologies.

I really feel the text is relevant and especially these days. This is because I have noticed that nothing changes a person as quickly and as gently as this text. And that is exactly what we need right now. We need people who are transforming now for the better. The elder generations are leaving us very quickly. And if the younger generation are not able to cope and catch up, we will be... we already are in a big trouble! (laughs). It's actually kind of late (laughs). This should have been taught decades ago. And I think many masters did. But still, we need more studies of this text.

**Matthew:** I really do notice the time going quickly. The older generations are leaving us very quickly. Quicker and quicker, and I just turned thirty-one yesterday. I myself notice life going very, very quickly. I was always the youngest one in our Sangha. But now, that is not the case. I understand Rinpoche is a translator for the 84000 project. Might Rinpoche like to say something about Rinpoche's involvement with 84000, what texts Rinpoche has translated, and what Rinpoche is currently translating?

**Do Tulku:** About my involvement in this undertaking... well, it is a huge project. In many ways, I think one can say that it is probably the biggest translation project of mankind (laughs). They have set a timeframe of 100 years to translate between 300 to 320 or 330 volumes of the teachings. So first, they're translating the

words of the Buddha, which are around more than 100 volumes, 110 and 111 volumes, which are in Tibetan, and I think after a while, they would like to move on to the Pali and Chinese versions. But right now, 84000 are mainly focused on Tibetan and Sanskrit translating, and this is really huge and I'm given to understand that there are around 200 translators working together to complete this project. That was a couple of years ago when I had a talk with a friend of mine, who is very much involved. So we have translation contracts with 84000. Now, to complete the translations, it is preferred if you have a team. So in a team, you need a native speaker, a traditional scholar, and preferably a Sanskrit scholar. After having those three, then the more the merrier, if you have four, five, some teams have 10-15 people... with six or seven native speakers who are all working together. So that's very nice.

In our team, we have four or five members and we call ourselves *Dharmasāgara Translation Group*. So my role in the team, is as a traditional scholar who prepares the first draft translation. As part of this process, I go through the text word by word in the beginning. Then the native speakers listen and after the first draft is translated we argue. Of course now they have to do their work so they change all the grammatical mistakes (laughs). And yeah it's very interesting and at times very boring (laughs) and at times very frustrating when you don't get your things done (laughs). The first text we translated was, 'The Sutra of the Three Trainings', a very short sutra. And then, 'Inquiry on Selflessness', that was another text. And then, 'Nectar of Speech', I think that was the name of the sutra. These we finished years ago. And then we also translated, 'The Rice Seedling Sutra' and this one is quite important for many reasons, especially for the Madhyamika context. Many people like Nagarjuna and these people, they're said to have also depended on this text. I think there is also a commentary of Nagarjuna himself on this sutra.

Currently I would be embarrassed to say we are working on it, because we are not, we're in a snooze. I have two kids and everybody has kids. And now we're doing

our own thing. But we should be working on *Sumatidarika-pariprccha*, which is the 'Inquiries of the Girl Sumati' Sutra. It's very interesting sutra actually, and it's about a little girl, who is about eight years old and goes to the Buddha and asks these profound questions and the Buddha gives very long answers. So in short, Buddha tells her that there are 40 different practices that Bodhisattvas should do and need to do in order to benefit beings. She takes a vow that from now on she will practice all these 40 practices. And we're not talking about like a sutra for children. No. Then the monks they kind of underestimate her and say, "Oh, you're just a little girl and how could you practice" and then she's really invincible when they try to argue with her... even Manjushri loses in an argument with her! So then Manjushri is completely confused and asks Buddha, "Who is this girl?" And Buddha says, "Oh, she's your own teacher, the first teacher you had on this path is this girl!" So then Manjushri remembers, so it's a very interesting sutra, very short. And frankly, we should be finishing it. Yes (laughs). That is my shame! We're working on it.

**Matthew:** As a householder and teacher, I imagine you are very busy. Might you like to comment on some of the challenges and opportunities that lay practitioners and householders in particular face? There are a few young families in the E-Vam Sangha and any advice I'm sure will be helpful.

**Do Tulku:** Yes. Well, I'm glad that you put lay practitioner and householder in the question. Because they're different, very different. Many lay practitioners are not householder and they have a lot of freedom. Actually they have more freedom than the monastics in many regards. But as a householder now that's quite challenging. Especially when you have to... for example, for me, it's very difficult to live together with other people in such close proximity for such a long time and especially with this quarantine, I'm not really used to that. I lived in monasteries for 12-13 years where everyone has their rooms. In a way you're in a large group, yes, but you also have a lot of freedom. And then coming here living with a family like this full time has been challenging.

Now, as a householder you can try to disperse your practice throughout your day and little things you can change. Like doing some practices whilst commuting, doing some practices while relating with people – well, actually, much of this advice is very clearly given in our practice manuals. For example, to consider all sounds as echoes and to consider all appearance as dreamlike. Also in the Seven Point Mind-Training, Chekawa Yeshe Dorje says that to actually think and remember, and question again and again, "Is this a dream? Is this a dream?" throughout the day. All these things are very possible. No matter how busy we are, we can actually find moments here and there to actually remind ourselves of these.

**“These are practices which may seem too simple for our sophisticated society. But they are actually quite important, like when going out the door, thinking “Oh, may I liberate all beings from samsara.” And these practices are easy... I guess it's too easy and this is our problem, we need complicated things to feel secure.”**

And these are practices which may seem too simple for our sophisticated society. But they are actually quite important, like when going out the door, thinking "Oh, may I liberate all beings from samsara." And for example, going down the stairs to actually visualize that, "Soon, one day, may I be able to enter the depths of lower realms to liberate beings." And these practices are easy... I guess it's too easy and this is our problem, we need complicated things to feel secure.

Or else to hold your child in your arms and look at the child and because this is now someone you love, like nothing else. I think a parent knows that you've never in your life loved anyone or anything as you love this person. For the first time in your life, you get a sense that you can actually put yourself in harm's way without a second's thought for this person. Like, actually. Before you used to think romantically, yes, it is heroic to sacrifice yourself. But now there is no sense of heroism, just like it's a need that you have almost. And I think actually that

is such a raw example of bodhichitta. To just think now, "If only I could consider all beings as my child," which is the way it's supposed to be and in this cruel play of samsara we forget that, nobody remembers that we change. And I think that in these ways, we can always be connected to the Dharma, so to speak, even when we are so busy. For example, let's say for some people see the above examples as far fetched a little bit (laughs), then you just look at the child and even the thought of harm to the child, a small harm, is extremely unbearable.

**Matthew:** Looking at some people who have had a child. They are shocked, they didn't realize that they could care for someone so much.

**Do Tulku:** So then, now, what ordinarily people do is we only think about this life of this child. I think as a practitioner and believer in life after death, and so on, it's only logical to think what will happen to them when they die? What will happen to them when I'm no more? Who will protect them? And then to make aspirations as you hold the child in your own arms, and to actually make aspirations for the child such as, "May you reach Buddhahood, soon, swiftly." Or, to look at the child and remember words like, "If you have attachment to this life, you're not a Dharma practitioner." So this is this life (laughs). Anyway, sorry, there are just so many examples. Another way is to set a specific time to practice, which we all do, which we have to do, and then be mundane for the rest of the day, and be a Dharma practitioner only during that set time. That's not bad, even though Milarepa says, "Oh, that's bad!" But he is Milarepa, he is in a cave! (laughs) We cannot do what he can do. So it's really good. Be mundane during the rest of the

day and practice during practice time. So there's two ways to go about it. And I don't know which one is good for whom. Maybe a bit of both (laughs).

**Matthew:** What have you seen is the best way for newcomers to begin to connect with Dharma?

**Do Tulku:** Well, okay, to answer this question, there is practice I see of two kinds. One that requires that when it is introduced to you, it requires a lot of contemplation and some change in attitude, and so on. Now this type of practice, I think, can be for everyone. And if people would just do it, rather than first trying to understand how it works – nobody does that... we see a motorbike, we put keys in it, we ride. Nobody says, "How does this combustion work?" Nobody needs to know! And it baffles me sometimes. Sometimes people ask so many questions for a simple practice. When the rest of the time in life, we don't ask anything; if it functions, it functions. So this is related to the practice of meditation or contemplation of compassion and so on. It works and it's just to be experienced, rather than to understand mostly.

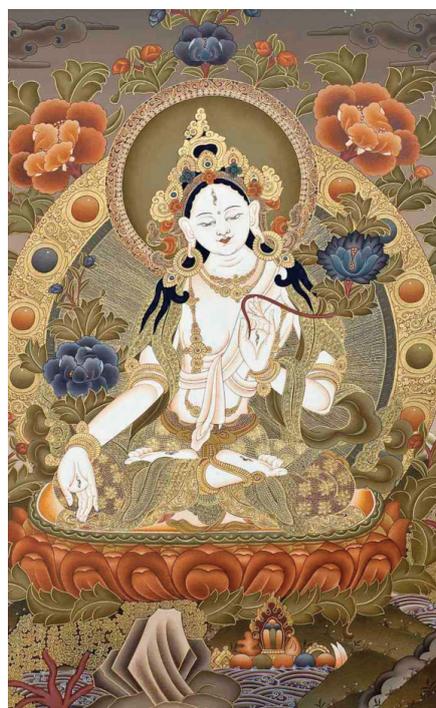
The other part is when you go to places and you're given sadhanas and different pujas. There, I think, it's actually not fair if we give these to people without explaining a little bit, some sort of explanation, some sort of background. And we could end up alienating them actually from what Dharma practices really are.

So when you say, "How can newcomers begin to connect with practice?" since these are beginners, a lot of responsibilities actually lies with the instructor or teacher, actually. To know what to reveal and when. But it's a very difficult thing, right? I don't know the answer to that (laughs).

**Matthew:** With the limitations of COVID restrictions that we've all been facing, how can we help those around us who are interested in Dharma to connect with it without the physical presence of a Lama or a Teacher?

**Do Tulku:** Again, this is a difficult question because, to actually connect with a teacher, then watching YouTube videos doesn't really create a personal connection.

That is, unless you are very, very fortunate, that you just watch the masters from far away on the internet and so on and it actually creates a connection that you feel like you're really connected. This happens to some people and they're very fortunate. Many people, most of us, need to meet a teacher. I mean, look at what is happening right now in our Buddhist Western world. We are really decreasing in number, I think quite a lot. And we see what has happened is that earlier many great masters would actually travel and spend a week here and a day there and people would drive to go there and see the teacher and go there meet and to actually



witness this person eating, sitting, laughing. People such as Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche or the previous Karmapa. I think it really does something to you when you really... it gives you a very, very different view. You've never seen a person like that in your life, you couldn't, you didn't know that such a person is possible. Now, first of all, many masters have passed away and secondly many masters also don't travel so much for various reasons.

And it's difficult because now, for me, it's bittersweet because the more these masters travel outside India and Tibet, the less the Tibetans and the Indians get to see them. So sometimes what happens is a teacher is traveling too much and people are complaining all the time. The lay

people in the community complain and the monastics complain. There are retreats to lead... and up until now, most of the lineage holders that we've managed to produce have been monastics. In the West we have managed to train some people in some aspects, and other people in other aspects. But you can hardly find a Westerner that is fully trained in all of it. Like a Westerner who can come give initiation no problems or do retreat no problem or give oral transmission no problem. There are very few people in the West who can do all of this. And it is very difficult to do. So I try to see both sides. And I find that it's a bit sad that we have to share, and we have to do all of that and it's mainly because of the geographical problems.

So yes, for the new Buddhists it is definitely a big problem. We have a huge lack, we have a huge problem of not many people seriously interested in Buddhism. Previously, there weren't many different choices. Now there are people using the name of the Buddha's teachings and words related to the Buddha like 'meditation' and so on, but they are not Buddhist so they take a huge chunk of that potential interest in the Dharma away... those possible people, and then they send them on a different path of some 'new age' yoga and meditation that those people do, and on top of that, masters are not traveling. Now you go to European centers... I don't know about other places, but most centers, the people's (the sangha's) average age is 50 to 60 years, and that's really alarming. So after 20-30 years, we are going to have a big problem (laughs). That's just how it is. Also, many centers don't give the youngsters important roles. You know, and whilst it's so difficult to say why more younger people are not attending Dharma centers because there's so many causes, it is a very big worry I have.

**Matthew:** Rinpoche, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me and answering these questions.

**Do Tulku:** I really wish E-Vam really good luck. And I really hope that we will have a rich crop of future Buddhist practitioners. Really, we need that! We're going to be in big trouble, very soon (laughs). Take care. Thank you very much Matt. ■

# Interview with Dr Kathleen Gregory, Psychologist and practicing Buddhist

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Felicity Lodro



*Kathleen Gregory, one of the 2021 Buddhist Summer School presenters, in this interview, speaks about the underlying assumptions of the human condition within the modern mindfulness movement and its contrasts to Buddhist mindfulness.*

**Felicity:** Thank you for your time Kathleen. Can you describe some of the main underlying assumptions of the human condition within the modern secular mindfulness movement?

**Kathleen:** This is a big question and one that tends not to be addressed since notions like the “human condition” or “human nature” are not really favoured in the contemporary context as we have come to privilege small, localised narratives of experience over “grand narrative” statements. However, this does not mean they are not there as you rightly say as “underlying assumptions” or taken-for granted beliefs that shape our contemporary understanding of human beings. In this way, the modern mindfulness movement is more the carrier or a means of expression of these implicit assumptions, rather than the source per se. As a result, whether we are practicing mindfulness in the Buddhist context or as part of the modern mindfulness movement, we are all influenced by the broader ideological context in which

those beliefs and assumptions about human nature and the human condition are situated.

To this question I would highlight two related aspects that reflect key dominating views of human beings. Firstly, the modern mindfulness movement reflects and promotes the idea that we are primarily psychological beings. By eschewing religion and tradition and through the link to the discipline of psychology, the modern mindfulness movement marks a definitive shift away from, if not rejection of, notions of spirituality or transcendence. Related to this, as many commentators have noted, mindfulness therefore has been removed from its ethical context and its association with notions of character and values. As a result, mindfulness as a modern secular practice can become a very individualistic process of bettering ourselves in some way with an emphasis on feeling or functioning better. Rather than in the service of a more radical transformation of being when practiced in the context of Buddhism.

Of course, we are psychological beings and both psychological concepts and practices are necessary to help ourselves in some way, while feeling and functioning better are positive things. However, I want to emphasise the fundamental view of human beings that is promoted here which can be helpful to reflect upon. When we see ourselves primarily in terms of these aspects and goals, does this view of human being limit or open possibilities? Is this a view we agree with? What are the consequences of this view in terms of our sense of self and sense of our potentiality as human beings? I would also add that because in Buddhism there is an understanding of impermanence and selflessness for example, then if we are engaging mindfulness – or any psychological method – in hoping to secure our experience in some way or to

get ourselves “right”, this can only be a futile endeavour and the source of more suffering. Interrogating how we think about mindfulness and why we practice it with these understandings from Buddhism is a wonderful exercise whether we are practicing mindfulness in a secular or Buddhist context.

The second aspect which relates to the psychological view relates to the impact neuroscience is playing in our understanding of mindfulness and thus of ourselves. Here we see all the complexity and potentiality of human beings and the richness of their subjective experience, regarded as fundamentally “brain activity”. In fact, mindfulness is now popularly equated with the idea of “change your brain”. From the view of “human nature” or our understanding of the “human condition”, I am concerned by the level of unquestioning or even casual acceptance of this idea as it has ramifications for our understanding of human beings and by extension, ramifications for our sense of ourselves.

**Felicity:** What do you feel are the main strengths, or potential positive outcomes of the modern mindfulness approach?

**Kathleen:** The modern mindfulness movement has brought access to the practice of mindfulness in ways unimaginable even forty or so years ago when Jon Kabat-Zinn starting teaching mindfulness in a medical context to people suffering chronic illness and stress. Today mindfulness has become naturalized to the extent that many people would say they are familiar with the idea of mindfulness. While the association of mindfulness with such things as peace, calm, even happiness helps bring value to these qualities. Mindfulness also brings attention to the impact of thoughts and thinking on our experience; and provides a tool to help people manage the effects of clinical symptoms of anxiety, pain and so on. While teaching mindfulness in

schools and university programs in the field of the health sciences is now common practice. Mindfulness no doubt is part of the contemporary zeitgeist related to notions of well-being. It can be a steppingstone for many people to explore spirituality in their lives and to engage with Buddhism and other traditions in a meaningful way. It is an amazing thing that this has occurred.

**“When mindfulness is engaged purely as a psychological practice, then accustomed ways of knowing and relating to ourselves can be reinforced. If mindfulness is viewed from within a larger frame which includes spiritual dimensions and a focus on character development as Rinpoche emphasised, then transformation is possible.”**

**Felicity :** What do you feel are the main weaknesses of the modern mindfulness approach?

**Kathleen:** To this question, given the popularity of the idea of mindfulness, there can in fact be less clarity about what is meant by mindfulness and this can create confusion and misunderstandings, which in turn can affect people’s experience with the practice. More specifically, I do think what weakens the practice of mindfulness in the modern mindfulness movement is that mindfulness is often reduced to the idea of “attention”. Suggesting that just being attentive to what you are doing – eating, running, gardening and so on – is the practice of mindfulness. While being more attentive in our lives is a good thing and can have a positive impact on our well-being, it does not express the “fullness” of what mindfulness practice is and therefore, limits the transformative impact it can have.

In fact, people often bring expectations of transformation to their practice of mindfulness. This opens the possibility – as I have seen over and over – that people can feel that as individuals they are “failing” at mindfulness since they are not experiencing those transformative impacts despite their best efforts to be mindful.

**Felicity :** In your Summer School course you described the radical view in

Buddhism. Can you briefly describe the radical aspect?

**Kathleen:** For me, the radicalism of Buddhism lies in the fact that it invites or maybe more rightly demands us to consider, there are experiences we do not yet know or are unaccustomed to knowing, as Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX taught. When we open ourselves to this

possibility, we can begin to appreciate how much we tend towards what is familiar, and how we look for confirmation and repetition in our experience rather than widening the frame. In this way, we can understand the psychological viewpoint of human beings to be only one way of knowing and one that we are very accustomed to as contemporary persons. When mindfulness is engaged purely as a psychological practice, then accustomed ways of knowing and relating to ourselves can be reinforced. If mindfulness is viewed from within a larger frame which includes spiritual dimensions and a focus on character development as Rinpoche emphasised, then transformation is possible. In this way, the true radicalism of Buddhism lies not in notions of rejecting or manipulating the self, but in working realistically and confidently with what we

are to become who we can be. This radicalism is expressed in a movement in relation to the self from ideas of improvement to transformation; from being a “better self” to an actual revolution of the self. Simply and radically, we can be more of who we are, because we are more than we think we are.

**Felicity :** What do you see as the greatest strengths of this radical view from the practitioners perspective? What kind of potentialities does it encourage?

**Kathleen:** For the practitioner, this means everything is interesting in terms of seeing how we are “creating” our experience – our self. Having curiosity about what we think and how we make sense of ourselves, leads us to notice how these habits impact our sense of ourselves. In turn, when we notice this relationship between what we think and what we experience, then it is possible for a sense of genuine care for ourselves to become a motivator in our practice. Compassion for others can naturally flow as we realize they also suffer like us trapped in cycles of trying to get ourselves “right”, “failing”, feeling bad about ourselves and so on. At the same time, through practice, study and reflection confidence in enlightenment – the radical view of human being – can grow as we appreciate it is neither hypothetical nor a faraway ideal. Enlightenment for most of us is at first an idea we have to develop a relationship to – we may struggle to see ourselves from that view. Fundamentally, seeing ourselves as resourceful and capable to be the person we aspire to be, is the radical transformation of the self. I have begun to appreciate that this is where radicalism begins. This is what I hoped to convey in the Buddhist Summer School. ■



# Buddhism, Deep Ecology and Martin Heidegger

by Dr Peter Oldmeadows

Introduction to his new book through Platform Books



The environmental issues humanity currently faces are complex and multifaceted. They may be engaged with from a management, technological, and scientific approach, but they can also be approached from a philosophical and spiritual perspective. In fact, it is arguable that the latter approaches deal with the underlying causes of such environmental issues much more effectively than the former.

*“Deep Ecology”* was a term coined by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in

1973. This term contrasts with ‘shallow ecology’. What Naess meant by ‘shallow ecology’ was a management kind of approach to ecology which regards ecological issues as essentially management issues: if we just manage things better, we wouldn’t have the ecological problems. Seeing environmental issues as essentially technological problems would also be a shallow approach.

*In contrast, in deep ecology the approach to the environment raises spiritual or philosophical questions. Environmental problems cannot just be left to await a technological answer or a management solution. Accordingly, our relationship with the environment can be viewed as a philosophical and spiritual problem.”*

In this article Oldmeadow explores the philosophical streams of thought that characterises a peculiarly Western/European mindset which sets up subject-object dualities and ultimately turns the environment into resources for consumption. He also highlights, clarifies and distills, the key insights from both the Western Philosophical tradition (Heidegger and Spinoza) as well as from

the Eastern spiritual traditions, namely Buddhism. Through his exploration the reader gains insights into what the environmental crisis really means, in what regard Buddhist thought may provide the conceptual framework to critique such a destructive attitude towards the environment – one of separately existing external ‘things’ and separate and distinct ‘Self’ – and indicates ways Buddhism may contribute powerfully to the discussions taking place today.

Far from seeing nature as enhancing humanities powers and as being distinct from the individual, Buddhism espouses the notion of interdependence. This is the view that we are part of and not separate from the environment. It also extends this to the affinity we have with non-human creatures and on a much deeper level contends that the way we truly operate in the world is through enmeshment or non-separation between subject and object, and therefore we can never truly extricate ourselves from others or indeed the environment totally or completely. Read the full article here.

<https://platformbooks.co/deep-ecology-martin-heidegger-and-buddhism/>

## News From Shogam Publications

Of late, much of Shogam’s attention has been directed toward completing the documentary *Beyond Two Worlds, the Life of Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX*. As this newsletter goes to print we are finalising the post production phase of the documentary which means we are potentially weeks away from announcing dates for the Premiere. Over May and June 2021 keep your eyes out for an invitation to the online Premiere. There will also be limited seats available for the in-house Premieres at E-Vam Melbourne and Nyima Tashi in Auckland. Thank you to E-Vam Melbourne in particular for their help in organising the Premiere. As an accompaniment to the

documentary a pictorial biography of the same name will be released later in the year.

We are excited to announce that Shogam now has a distributor for our range of French translations of Traleg Rinpoche’s books. We have translated 6 of Traleg Rinpoche’s books and Yeunten Ling Buddhist Centre in Belgium are the distributors. *L’influence du Yogacara sur la Mahamoudra* by Traleg Kyabgon is now available in paperback to purchase through Yeunten Ling. For enquiries email: [yl.administration@tibinst.org](mailto:yl.administration@tibinst.org). *L’Abhidharmasamuccaya d’Asana* will be the next paperback. Both titles are also available as eBooks.

Our next book in English of Traleg Rinpoche’s teachings will be out later in the year. Entitled *How To Do Life*, Rinpoche expounds on ways of approaching life’s many challenges. In this book Rinpoche discusses so many aspects of everyday life from relationships, sexuality to managing depression and disturbing emotions. In sharing Traleg Rinpoche’s teachings, it is Shogam’s wish that many will benefit. All Shogam Publications are available through Traleg Rinpoche’s Centres, Namse Bangdzo bookshop at KTD Woodstock and online at all major online bookstores, and as eBooks. ■

*Traleg Khandro*

# E-Vam Institute News, Melbourne Australia

We began the year with the Buddhist Summer School in January held entirely online for the first time. Teachers both local and international included Ekai Korematsu Roshi, Elizabeth Mattis Nyamgel, Sam Bercholz, Ajahn Dr Buddharakkhita, Dr Kathleen Gregory, Dr Ruth Gamble and Dechen Davies. The various Buddhist perspectives and topics ranged from psychological, environmental, philosophical to practical advice on meditation. Many thanks to all who participated and helped make the Summer School such a success!

Tibetan New Year Celebration - In February, Melbourne went into a snap lockdown, obstructing our plans to gather for our traditional Losar Party. Quickly the event was transformed into an online-only occasion. With the help of Nyima Gelek, E-Vam residents and staff, a lovely Chenrezig practice was conducted to bring in the year of the ox.

Easter Retreat 2021 - With the relaxing of the covid restrictions, it was with great pleasure we could offer an "in-person" retreat at Maitripa Centre for the Annual Easter Retreat. With video Teachings of Traleg Rinpoche on Karma and Rebirth, and a daily schedule including pranayama,

puja and lots of meditation, and it was wonderful to see so many new faces. Thanks to all the volunteers and staff who made this possible: Including Lisa and Daniel Blaze, Lee Floyd, Matthew Hassett, Michael Neighbour, Jarrah Wishart, Pradipo Luy, Bill and Sue Howes, Kathleen Gregory, David MacAdams and Nina Czempinski. Not to mention Katherine Brandenburg, our marvellous retreat chef who provided delicious and nourishing food.

The Way Of The Bodhisattva- with Do Tulku Rinpoche - Over eight weeks, E-Vam Institute has been presenting "The Way of the Bodhisattva - with Do Tulku Rinpoche streaming live from Germany. Rinpoche's teachings have been extraordinary, and Rinpoche's candid and vivid unpacking of the meaning of each verse makes the teachings highly accessible, as we explore the importance of bodhicitta (developing an enlightened heart). Rinpoche's approach is down to earth and passionate, very inspiring and has been a great highlight of the year so far!

Traleg Yangsi Rinpoche 10th Birthday Celebration - in April, members of the community gathered to celebrate the 8th

birthday of Traleg Yangsi Rinpoche. The community gathered online and in person, marking the occasion by chanting the "Calling the Guru from Afar" puja and then joining for birthday cake and drinks afterwards. Special thanks to Nyima Gelek for leading the puja, and the staff for organising the evening and filming and editing a video of the evening. This video was presented to Rinpoche to commemorate the occasion.

Judging by the numbers in attendance and positive feedback, everyone has been enjoying connecting online to listen and practice the Dharma. It has been especially wonderful to enjoy the return of some "in-house" courses and celebrations as well. Many thanks go to all the wonderful staff and volunteers who have helped with the programs so far this year and in so many other ways. ■

*Mark Dawson*



## Maitripa Centre, Healesville Update

Maitripa Centre has been full of activity, hosting retreats every weekend since lockdown for both well established and new groups and organisations. Towards the end of last year we made a few adjustments for our bookings in line with our covid-safe plan, to help everyone on site at Maitripa feel safe and comfortable during their stay.

Aruna Giri hosted the first retreat since re-opening over New Year's Eve 2021. It was great to see Aruna and many of his students come for their first retreat since lockdown. We have also enjoyed hosting Mickey Space with his Sparkly Yoga Graduation weekend; Anahata Giri with One Heart Yoga and Meditation, Ziran Kung Fu, Clifton Hill Zen, The School for F.M. Alexander Technique, and the Mindfulness Training Institute of

Australia also conducted their annual 5 day silent retreat.

We have also welcomed two new groups: The Beauty of Yoga and The Healing Academy of Australia. It was a pleasure hosting both these groups for the first time and we hope to see Amber and her students, and Connie and her team back at Maitripa again soon.

The highlight of the year thus far has been the annual E-Vam Easter Retreat. Keeping with the format developed by Traleg Rinpoche, participants made full use of Maitripa Centre's facilities, with the formal program being run in the larger hall having pujas, meditation, pranayama and very informative teachings by Traleg Rinpoche. Dogen's cafe was open for delicious coffees and cake throughout the day and Apsara Bar was open for a drink

or two in the evenings. It was really wonderful to see so many new faces on the retreat and for the Sangha members to enjoying time together.

Maitripa Centre continues to grow and work is continuously being done behind the scenes to make sure practitioners of all schools can come and have a precious experience. The following volunteers have really supported Maitripa in various ways and we wish to thank them deeply for their help: Bill Howes, Michael Neighbour, Dave Bennett, Pradipo Luy, Lisa Blaze, Mike Tahana and Andrew Donovan. We look forward to hosting more new groups as well as returning groups over the coming months. ■

*Daniel Blaze  
Caretaker, Maitripa Centre*

# News from Nyima Tashi Buddhist Centre Auckland, New Zealand



On behalf of Ani Jangchub and the Nyima Tashi sangha, we send our warmest greetings from autumnal Auckland.

We are delighted to once again be able to be in touch with you all and share some of the news of what is happening here at Traleg Rinpoche's New Zealand Centre.

As the announcement of the "travel bubble" opening between Australia and New Zealand came from our respective governments this week, we also were so very fortunate to join with some of our Australian sangha this week for another reason. Lama Chonam and Sangye Khandro most kindly made themselves available to join a Zoom meeting with a number of students from Australia and NZ to discuss the possibility of receiving further teaching in the Troma Nagmo Chod cycle of the Dudjom lineage. Not only was this a precious opportunity to interact with two most accomplished teachers and practitioners, but it was also a precious (and rare) opportunity to interact with each other as students of Traleg Rinpoche.

As Rinpoche always said, each of His

Centres carries a different 'flavour', but we must always remember one another and try to be of support to each other. This pandemic has, in some ways, increased our perceived feelings of isolation, but it has also brought some very special opportunities for us to be together in ways we had never dreamed possible before. Nyima Tashi is a relatively new Centre, so it was heart-warming for us to connect with and see the faces of our friends in Melbourne and elsewhere in Australia – with some of those seasoned students who had the great fortune to study under the Traleg Rinpoche for many years. We sincerely hope that this connection might truly bear fruit in the future.

The 2021 Auckland Buddhist Summer School, hosted by Nyima Tashi in February also bore an unexpected benefit of the travel restrictions in that we were able to host several Teachers via Zoom whom we had always held the aspiration to host in person. Ringu Tulku Rinpoche, Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe (from Drogmi Buddhist Institute), Doko Hatchett, Elizabeth Mattis Namgyel, Jakob Leschly and Chris Krageloh

comprised the panel of teachers this year. It was through the blessings of Traleg Rinpoche that we were able to assemble such an auspicious array of Teachers and this year's Summer School was a true meeting of minds between the Teachers as their respective topics dovetailed and interacted in such a rich way.

Nyima Tashi is now open for 2021 with weekly meditation classes and the Book Club which is studying Traleg Rinpoche's "Luminous Bliss: self-realisation through meditation". Our Shedra class is commencing in April and will continue studying "Gateway to Knowledge" by Mipham Rinpoche through the Teachings of Traleg Rinpoche. We are sincerely grateful to Traleg Rinpoche's foresight and to all the students who so dedicatedly recorded and catalogued Rinpoche's Teachings so they are available for us today.

Students of the Centre will also be regularly meeting to practice Ngondro together and to study Troma Nagmo Chod.

In 2021, Ani Jangchub plans to arrange several three-day retreats at a cloistered facility here in Auckland to support the practice of the students.

And, on that note, we wish to acknowledge with a deep bow that we rely so much on Ani Jangchub, her devotion to Traleg Rinpoche and her ferocious compassion. We pray for your happiness, good health and a long life, Ani-la!

With warmest wishes to you all, Meaghan on behalf of Nyima Tashi Kagyu Buddhist Centre. ■

*Meaghan Duffy*

*For more information about Nyima Tashi:*

*Website <https://nyima-tashi.org.nz>*

*Email [nyimatashi.nz@gmail.com](mailto:nyimatashi.nz@gmail.com)*



# News from E-Vam Buddhist Institute in the United States

Warmest regards from the E-Vam US Sangha. We conducted our first Online Study Group series for 2021 during March-April on zoom. We continued our studies based on Traleg Rinpoche's Dzogchen teachings included in his book *Actuality of Being*. Our online time together continues to be inspiring and very fruitful. Our next online study session series will begin early June 2021. Anyone interested in attending should email [office@evam.org](mailto:office@evam.org) to register. Sessions are by donation. The sessions are held at 7pm New York time one evening a week on Zoom. All are welcome. We are also in the process of planning this year's annual retreat in late August 2021. The Retreat will include: Audio teachings on Dzog Chen by Traleg Rinpoche; Discussion on the Four Immeasurables led by Lama Jinpa from the KTD Woodstock Sangha; meditation sessions led by senior sangha members; morning and evening Pujas - Tara and Chenrezig. We will continue to have an online retreat option available. More details will be posted on the website <https://evam.org> soon for those interested in participating.



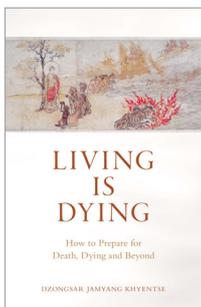
## IN MEMORIAL

In March we received some very sad news about our dear sangha member John Sullivan, one of E-Vam's longest standing members, who passed away after complications from a bad fall. John was an exceptionally kind and caring person, with a keen intellect always ensuring our discussions at E-Vam and on retreat were meaningful and in depth. John was a wonderful and devoted husband, father and grandfather. We pass on our heart felt condolences to his wife Sandy, their children and to John's whole family. We pray he has a positive rebirth close to the Dharma in a peaceful homeland. We keep our precious John in our thoughts and prayers. He will be sadly missed. ■

*Traleg Khandro*

## News From Akshara Bookstore

E-Vam Institute's Akshara Bookstore provides quality Dharmic books and ritual items to the public. To help with your study and practice, make sure you give Akshara a call or drop in and browse the amazing titles. Here is a selection of noteworthy titles



### Living Is Dying:

by *Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse*

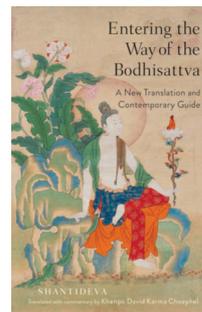
*Living Is Dying* collects teachings about death and the bardos that have been passed down through a long lineage of brilliant Buddhist masters, each of whom went to great lengths to examine the process in minute detail. Renowned author and teacher Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse responds to the most common questions he's been asked

about death and dying—exploring how one prepares for death, what to say to a loved one who is dying, and prayers and practices to use as a handhold when approaching the unknown territory of death. Whether you are facing death today or decades from now, preparing for it can help to allay your worst fears and help you appreciate what it means to be truly alive.

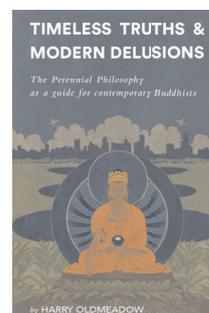
### Entering the Way of the Bodhisattva by *Khenpo David Karma Choephel*

This modern translation of an essential Mahayana Buddhist text captures the meaning and musicality of Shantideva's original verse and provides readers with an accessible guide to its profound depths.

This is a fresh translation of, and commentary on, *Entering the Way of the Bodhisattva*, perhaps the most renowned and thorough articulation of the bodhisattva path. Written by the eighth-century



Indian monk Shantideva, *Entering the Way of the Bodhisattva* is a guide to becoming a bodhisattva, someone who is dedicated to achieving enlightenment in order to benefit all beings. Accomplished translator Khenpo David Karma Choephel communicates the power of Shantideva's insights through careful attention to both the meaning and the rhythmic pulse of each stanza, all the while providing necessary context and practical advice for modern readers. After presenting the full translation, Khenpo David Karma Choephel then introduces readers to the text, explaining the key points of each chapter with clarity and wisdom.



### Timeless Truths and Modern by *Harry Oldmeadow*

In this curated selection of articles and talks, Harry Oldmeadow explores the Traditionalist perspective and, through this, he unearths many assumptions of the modern mindset. These assumptions, once uncovered, reveal the propaganda and conditioning that we are unwittingly subject to from without and within.. ■

For all these titles and other titles contact Akshara  
Bookstore: 03 9387 0422 or [info@evaminstitute.org](mailto:info@evaminstitute.org)

# E-Vam Institute 2021 Autumn-Winter Teaching Program

**22 April-13 May (Thursday evenings)**

**Special Event:**

**Do Tulku Rinpoche on the Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra:**

**The Way of the Bodhisattva – Part Two**

Do Tulku Rinpoche continues his teachings on the Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra which provide both the inspiration and guidance we need to bring compassion and wisdom together on the path. Please note that completion of part one is not a prerequisite for enrolling in part two.

**28-29 May**

**An Evening and Day of Teachings and Practice:**

**Meditation and the Spiritual Path in Mahamudra**

**The Teachings of Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX**

“Meditation is not practised purely as a mental discipline. It is a way of being, it is learning how to be in a novel way, a different way to what we are used to.”

*Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX*

At the Buddhist Summer School in 2005, Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX provided an extensive background to his book *Luminous Bliss: Self-realization through meditation*. Rinpoche explains both *shamatha* and *vipassana* meditation in the context of cultivating the correct view, appreciating the difference between what we usually call mind and wisdom mind, and the importance of understanding how to interpret our meditative experiences. This series of three teachings provide essential perspectives for new and experienced meditators alike.

**31 May- 4 June**

**A Week of Daily Meditation Practice**

“When we are doing meditation, our task is to learn how to overcome the deluded mind and give rise to the non-deluded wisdom mind.”

*Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX 2005*

Please join us for our autumn series of daily meditation practice following the Evening and Day of Practice. These sessions are open to everyone – from beginners to experienced meditators – offering an opportunity to encourage and consolidate daily practice. The daily meditation practice series provides a welcoming and supportive environment, guided by the meditation instructions as taught by Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX. Details TBA

**9-30 July (Friday evenings)**

**Annual Winter Zen course with Ekei Korematsu Roshi**

Continuing the annual tradition as requested by Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX, Ekei Roshi will teach on the Shōbōgenzō by the Great Master Eihei Dogen. This series draws from the *Shushō-gi* considers *What is Truly Meant by Training and Enlightenment*. Details TBA.

**27-29 August**

**Winter Weekend Retreat for Under 35s**

As part of E-Vam Institute’s ongoing Under 35s Program, we welcome newcomers and those with an interest in Buddhism to participate in a two-day Retreat at Maitripa Centre. The program includes Indo-Tibetan yoga, meditation, Buddhist philosophy and ritual practice. As well as incorporating aspects of retreat such as noble silence and adopting a mindful and positive attitude, the program offers an opportunity to deepen meditation practice.

*Please watch out for details of our upcoming Under 35s weekly Buddhist Philosophy and Meditation program. Contact the E-Vam Office for details.*

## PLAN AHEAD KEY FOR KEY E-VAM INSTITUTE TEACHING PROGRAM EVENTS:

**17-18 September**

**An Evening and Day of Teachings and Practice:  
The Teachings of Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX**

Details TBA.

**Details TBA.**

**Special Event:**

“If we’re going to benefit from the practice, we need to place ourselves in an environment that supports our spiritual goals.” *Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX.*

Retreat offers opportunity to consolidate practice, deepen knowledge of Buddhist philosophy as well as participate in the retreat schedule as established by Rinpoche.

Details TBA shortly.

**7-11 January 2022**

**Buddhist Summer School**

We look forward to sharing details with you soon.



# E-VAM INSTITUTE

ETHICS • CONCENTRATION • WISDOM