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## Four Brahmaviharas

### Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche



*This is the final talk in a series of four talks on the Four Brahmaviharas (also called Immeasurables or Infinities)—generating love, compassion, joy, and equanimity, given by Traleg Rinpoche in Australia in 2003.*

*Editor has added a brief summary of the Four Brahmavihara meditations based on Rinpoche's description over the four talks. Rinpoche explains a traditional approach to contemplating the Four Brahmaviharas within one's meditation practice. This is a brief summary of the sequence as a general guide:*

When meditating on the Four Immeasurables, we are seeking to develop some sense of spaciousness and encompassing positivity within our meditation. We can begin by generating *love* for three types of people—those we easily love, people we find challenging, and people we hardly know. Then we expand our focus to include our community and then extend our love non-discriminatorily to all beings: after this contemplation on love, we return to

*equanimity* reflecting on the changing nature of our relationships over our lives—people coming in and out of our lives. We then move to contemplating *compassion*, wishing the fulfilment of dreams, goals, and altruistic motives of those same three types of people—those we love, those we find difficult, and those we barely know. We then extend our compassion to include our community and then all beings; once again we return to equanimity before then contemplating *joy*—the celebration of fortunate circumstances and great achievements of others. Again we contemplate the three types of people, and extend to our community and all beings before returning to equanimity.

The prior talks can be read in full by visiting [evaminstitute.org/news-and-free-teachings-2/](http://evaminstitute.org/news-and-free-teachings-2/)



*Traleg Rinpoche's Teachings begin here:*

**W**hen we are focusing on one of the Four Immeasurables, we are bathing in it. For example, if we are bathing in happiness, we are celebrating and thinking that the person we are contemplating is deservedly happy, and we extend that to everyone being happy. Then we remain in that state of happiness or joy. We don't need to think anything too much. After specifically focusing on the three types of people, we can extend our happiness without using a person as the object of our focus. We can just simply generate happiness. We remain in that high spirit for a short while. Then we return to being in a state of equanimity and so on.

The Four Immeasurables can be practised in different ways and in a different order and so on. I will describe here how they are generally practised: First one generates love, and then from love attachment may arise, so in order to

**“From the Mahayana perspective, by practising the Four Immeasurables regularly, we will be thinking less and less of the more disturbing things that are not good for our well-being. The transformation is accumulative.”**

counteract that, one rests in equanimity and then moves to meditation on compassion. From the meditation on compassion, sentimentalism may arise. And so to counteract that, one meditates on equanimity again. With equanimity, one may descend into indifference or apathy, so from that state one can give rise to love again or move to the generation of joy. In this way, we can repeat these meditations over and over. By doing meditation on the Four Infinities, we can also address negative emotions and negative states of mind, without having to dwell upon them. If we have love, then proportionately, anger, aggression, hostility and so forth, will decrease. And if we meditate on compassion, attachment, greediness, neediness, all these will become diminished. Meditation on joy reduces the experience of jealousy, envy, and so on. Meditation on equanimity acts as a remedy or corrective mechanism, like an antidote to conceit, egocentrism,

selfishness, and so on. So instead of trying to get rid of excessive desire or excessive anger, resentment and so on, just by meditating on the Four Infinities and getting used to having these kind of feelings, emotions, and thoughts, they become part of our own make-up so to speak, one's own character traits, one's own way of being. It becomes how one is and how one expresses oneself, and how one perceives things. They become part of our make-up. In this way, we can automatically overcome varieties of unpleasantness we feel about ourselves, things we have been feeling guilty about, ashamed or fearful of, confused about, etcetera.

These disturbances can come to rest without having to deal with them directly. In that way, their power diminishes and their ability to make impressions on our mind becomes more and more faint. The bigger the impression that is made in the mind, the deeper the experiences, and the more lasting effect it produces. Faint

impressions have less of a lasting impact. In Buddhism, we can understand this from a karmic point of view and this is how it can be understood, that the negative tendencies begin to diminish. Unpleasantness we feel about ourselves can manifest as an obsessive thought. That thought comes up again and again and we can feel powerless to stop it. Such obsessive thoughts can take away any room to think about something else. We may think of other things for a time but then somehow return to that same obsessive thought, whatever it is. So it is with our negative states of mind.

From the Mahayana perspective, by practising the Four Immeasurables regularly, we will be thinking less and less of the more disturbing things that are not good for our well-being. The transformation is accumulative. Rather than saying to ourselves, “I'm not going to do that” or “I am not going to think that,”

rather than trying to think about something else, worry about not thinking something, or thinking about whatever it was that one was obsessively thinking about, all these concerns and obsessions can automatically diminish, and affect us less and less over time.

We do not often think in this way. We think differently, believing something drastic has to be done to overcome a problem we have with ourselves. The Four Brahmavirahas are a subtler way of dealing with ourselves, without even concentrating on ourselves. We do not need to think, “I have to change,” “I can't do this anymore,” “I should not do this anymore,” or “I can't stand it anymore.” Such thoughts can become overwhelming, and trying to improve ourselves in that way is so difficult to carry out. If all the self-absorptive thoughts are set aside, and instead we concentrate on the simple task of cultivating positive mental states, emotions, and feelings, all kind of discursive thoughts subside, and we become transformed. Our capacity to have positive emotions, feel joy, happiness, and love become enhanced. Our capacity to have affection for and care for others can increase.

Often when we speak about meditations of this kind in the West, people raise questions about this; “If we learn to overcome attachment, without attachment, how can we care?” Attachment interferes according to Buddhism. Our capacity to care for others is interfered with in a myriad of ways. Attachment is not a simple emotion; it is a complex emotion, often intermingled with varieties of other forms of negative emotional states, thought formations, ideas, and concepts. They become jumbled together and it clouds the mind as a consequence. So affection, true affection and a truly caring attitude can be separated from attachment. Attachment from the Buddhist a point of view means that one has a need to be attached to a material thing, physical condition, particular person or individuals, particular set of beliefs or ideas, or whatever, for one to feel secure, to have security. Attachment is seen as being fundamentally based on fear. One has to believe in something or someone to feel



certain and secure. If the things one is attached to and depends on such as beliefs are challenged, then one's reality falls apart. A loved object is under threat; one may even prefer to part with a loved one than risk the loss of their treasured object. Such loss can produce all kinds of anxiety about one's own self, one's own identity. One's whole identity can be challenged through loss or change. That is why so many problems can arise.

In Buddhism, it is never said that "non-attachment means that we should not have affection."

It is not about rising above our emotions. What is said is that as our thoughts, emotions, and feelings toward others increase, our understanding of the ever-moving nature of our thoughts, emotions, and feelings will be more understood. They will be revealed as something which is ever-moving, and not something existing as static, solid entities. They are in motion and are transient. Within that transiency is also stability. *Transient* does not mean that there is no stability whatsoever. Sometimes people may think that in Buddhism, because we emphasize the sense of transiency, we do not really cherish the notion of stability. Stability is very much valued in Buddhism. Stability, as I have been emphasising, does not come from things remaining the same. Things remaining the same is stultifying, a form of imprisonment. We take refuge in that. We find comfort in sameness. From the Buddhist point of view, that is illusory, fabricated, created by our own mind.

In reality, nothing stays the same, so we'll be better off realistically accepting that fact, rather than just pretending that there is some security we can find where things remain the same always. So we have to build stability based on acknowledging that fact. In Buddhism, in terms of our practice, we have to have stability. In terms of our spiritual growth, there has to be stability, steadiness. If we say, "Well, it's all about impermanence," we could become erratic and completely unpredictable. A real sense of stability comes from embracing the fact that everything is in motion and it is the same with our emotions and things that we care about, people we have affection for, and so forth.

In other words, we're constantly interacting with things, people, and other living creatures. We are never positioned in any kind of static world; there is nothing that remains the same. In Buddhism, that is where growth comes from, this is how we become, how we begin to learn to transcend our ordinariness. If things were static, we would never be able to rise above our ordinariness, we would always be trapped, and we could never aspire to become a bodhisattva or enlightened.



According to Buddhism, it is important to aspire to become a bodhisattva. We should aim towards that, and to do that, we have to cultivate ourselves through practices such as the Four Infinities, where we can become transformed, where we can effect change in ourselves without thinking of the self. I think that is worth emphasising.

There is a tendency to think of the Buddhist practice of self-transformation as also another way to improve ourselves

as we normally understand it, to fix ourselves up. In Buddhism we are counselled to transform ourselves in a different way. It's like putting all the pieces of a bicycle together, without thinking of the bicycle all the time. We do not have to be thinking "Oh, this bicycle, I have to fix this bicycle." We can get hung up over the bicycle, but what kind of bicycle we have is determined by the pieces. I hope that makes sense. Similarly, we do not have to be so obsessed about ourselves, but rather, if we contemplate the Four Immeasurables and things that are uplifting and thus helpful, and if we experience them in our meditation, then we will become transformed. We don't have to always worry about fixing ourselves, or constantly thinking about doing something for ourselves. This is worth thinking about because if we are too self-obsessed, we will tend to reinforce our pre-existing notions about ourselves that we hold. So it is then difficult to change affectively. What tends to happen is that we reinforce sense of self.

In these teachings, I have very closely followed how the Four Infinities are traditionally practised.

The final aspect still to be discussed is the notion of rebirth and using the contemplations in consideration of that. Those who wish to include this contemplation can visualise the three different types of people as before—those we love, those we find difficult, and those we hardly know. In terms of the past, you can think of and imagine previous lifetimes. When thinking of previous lifetimes, we contemplate, this person who I dislike intensely may have been my best friend in the previous life, and this person that I love so intensely in the present life could have been the worst person I ever encountered in my previous life, this person I barely know in this life may have been my dearest friend in past lives. You may like to practice in this way also. You don't have to do that of course. In Buddhism, this is not a precondition that you have to visualise in that way, you can do without it. You don't have to think in terms of previous life. The rebirth aspect of the practice is an extension not a substitute, so it does not alter any of the fundamentals of the Four Immeasurables practice. ■

## IN MEMORIAM

# Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche



As a wave of grief ricochets across the world following the parinirvana of Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, it seems helpful to reflect on the extraordinary qualities of this great mahasiddha.

The year was 1977, and Bill and I were at the 10th annual Kopan meditation course in the Kathmandu valley. We were among 250 Westerners from across the globe, sitting in a huge hessian tent. At that time, very few Tibetan Buddhist teachers spoke English or were prepared to teach Westerners, so Lama Zopa and Lama Yeshe were attractive to students. Many were passing hippies on the overland trail to Afghanistan, and everyone had a karmic story of how they came to be at Kopan. We spoke to a woman who had travelled from South America after Lama Zopa (who she did not know) appeared on her television screen, which was not turned on!

We had never met anyone like Lama

Zopa. He was like the Bowie song, “The man who fell to earth.” Bill recalls Rinpoche as, “a Clark Kent, young and capable of doing anything. Lama Zopa’s light was on 24/7—he wouldn’t be sleeping. Zopa means ‘patience’ and when taking a medicinal pill, Lama Zopa joked that ‘one pill gives me 100 coughs when I am teaching!’”

It took patience to hear what Lama Zopa taught, and he was renowned for being tireless—ceremonies and teachings could go all day and into the early hours of the morning. Lama Yeshe was a foil for Lama Zopa’s relentless purity, asceticism, and tireless transmission of the dharma. Lama Yeshe brought levity, along with his serious explanations of the workings of the Western mind. He would tell stories about how he had to stand over Lama Zopa to ensure he had eaten enough; Lama Zopa would simply forget to eat.

My impression of Lama Zopa is that he was an amazing mystic, an ascetic like

Milarepa, who had concern for all. His hands had a delicate sweeping motion as he walked, as though moving invisible entities to safety. He laughed a lot, with a joyful, high-pitched “hee hee hee.” Lama Zopa was perfection itself.

I will give an example of his ability to teach the nature of the mind without the use of words. While pulling weeds in the garden at Kopan, Lama Zopa Rinpoche walked by and said, “What are you doing?” Suddenly my brain was an enormous blank openness of possibility and I was unable to formulate an answer. I admitted, “I don’t know what I’m doing.” He responded, “You’re pulling weeds, aren’t you?” and walked on.

Bill and I trekked from Lukla to Lawudo, not far from Everest Base Camp, for a three-week Chenrezig retreat. At 4,500 metres, we climbed the steep hillside and awoke to snow, feeling we had entered a place of magic and mystery. Nearby retreat caves, some multi-storeyed



with walled terraces, piles of tsa tsas, and icy stalactites and stalagmites hanging from rocky outcrops could be seen.

The retreat was conducted by Lama Zopa at his monastery at the cave of his Nyingmapa predecessor, the Lawudo Lama. Monks and nuns from the surrounding area joined our practice from 3am to 11pm each day. We were underdressed for the snowy weather. Bill slept under the tin roof, which had half a metre of snow on top and said, “It was like being in a refrigerator, you just couldn’t get warm.” Lama Zopa wore his normal robes, and I asked him if he was cold—he laughed and said he didn’t feel the cold.

A second example of Lama Zopa’s skill in pointing out the mind, came during a break when Lama Zopa engaged me in small talk, “How are you; are you warm enough” and so on. He seemed to be reflecting my disturbed mind like a mirror, and I took a step back, mentally asking him to stop. As I stepped back, Lama Zopa stepped forward, and there

was no escape from this skilful lesson of being shown the healing power of staying with strong emotions.

It was said that nectar came from the corner of the Lawudo Lama’s cave. Bill spent time in the cave with Lama Zopa and reflected, “It had a little door in front, which I wasn’t expecting—it could almost have had a doorbell! It was an easy, intimate interaction with Lama Zopa, and it was easy to understand him, which was different to when he was teaching. I was given advice to eat food as though I was a gummy old man without teeth, to extract the nutrients. That was my take-away, and was a strange thing to give me at the time.”

We made the decision to ask the Lama’s to marry us if it would benefit our dharma practice. The beautiful puja ceremony at Kopan still carries their blessing.

Back in Melbourne, Lama Zopa visited and taught at Anglesea before going to Chenrezig Institute in Queensland. We asked if we should make the journey; he

responded, “What else would you do?” At Chenrezig we had our first glimpse of Traleg Rinpoche, a brochure of his teachings, which took us back to Melbourne.

I was fortunate to be at E-Vam Institute in Kew in the early 1980s when Traleg Rinpoche hosted Lama Zopa to a private lunch. They had met at the Buxa Duar Fort, which became a refugee camp for Tibetans in 1959. Traleg Rinpoche had been looking for a Lama Yeshe from the Kagyu tradition and was instead directed to Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa. They enjoyed each other’s company, and I had the joy and privilege to chauffeur Lama Zopa.

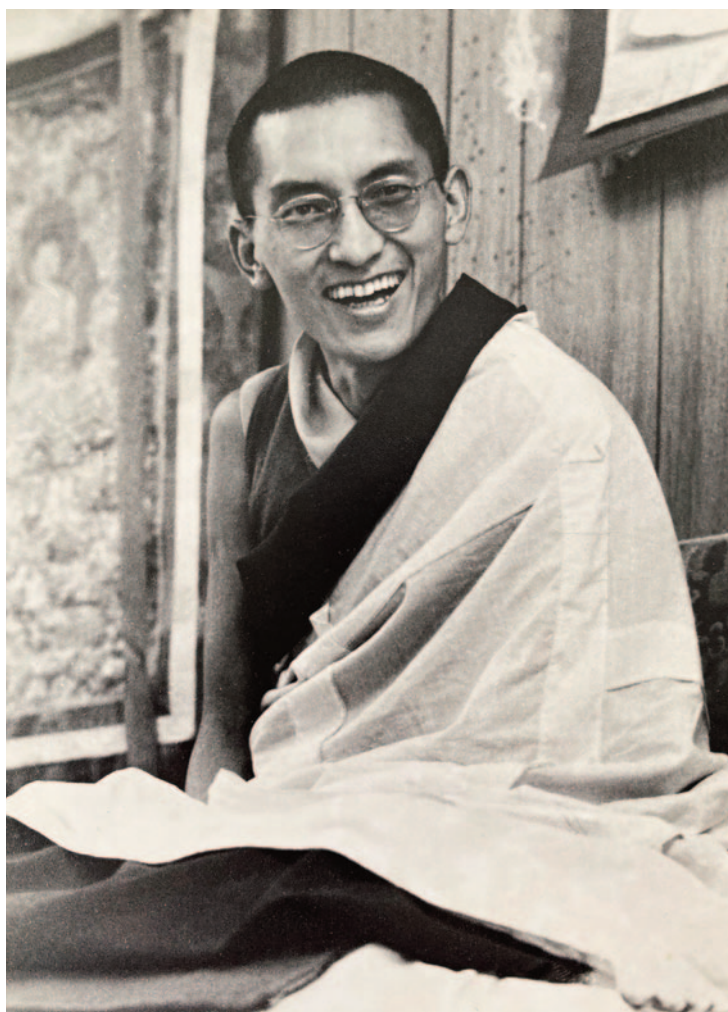
Lama Zopa gave everything of himself to benefit sentient beings. May he rest, and return strong and healthy. Traleg Rinpoche’s students would like to offer sincere love and care to Lama Zopa’s students. May the dharma fill the hole of grief. ■

*Susan Howes*

**“Whatever problem one experiences, one can think about the benefits of problems and how they are beneficial for one’s own life, to develop one’s mind in compassion, to develop loving kindness, patience, wisdom, and all the positive qualities for the path to liberation.**

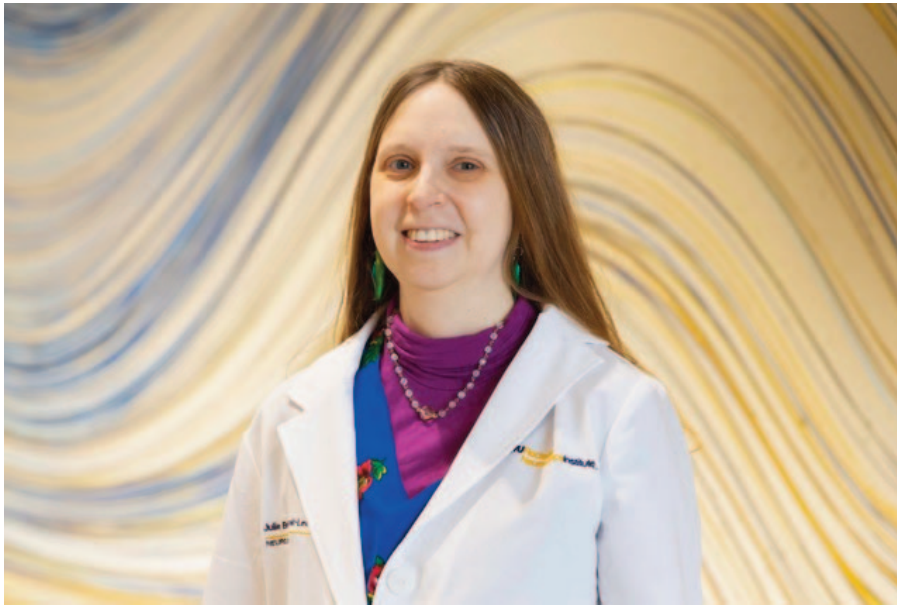
**By thinking of the benefits, one develops this precious quality, this most healthy positive way of thinking that brings happiness, and that stops you from harming yourself and harming others.”**

*Lama Zopa Rinpoche*



# Interview with Dr Julie Brefczynski Lewis

Traleig Khandro



*Dr Julie Brefczynski Lewis is a neuroscientist and part of the E-Vam Institute Sangha in the U.S. Julie gave a wonderful course at the Buddhist Summer School at Maitripa Centre in Australia in January 2023.*

**Khandro:** Thank you for your time. It's lovely to be able to interview you for the E-Vam Newsletter. Julie, I wonder if you can tell me a little bit about how you came to the Dharma, a little bit of background?

**Julie:** Oh, sure. I became interested in meditation from books when I was in grad school. So, I was trying to do meditation. I grew up Catholic, and I really tried very, very hard to be Catholic and it just didn't work. For a while, I didn't want any religion at all. I felt that religions may be the cause of war and conflicts and I had some ideas around that.

There was a Shambhala Centre in Milwaukee when I started to do my Graduate School work and what I liked was that they had a secular space. On Saturdays, they would have something that was called "Café Shambala." They would take Japanese screens and put them over the shrine. I felt comfortable with that because I was really just a little anti-religion at that time in my life. I did that for a couple of years.

Then somebody told me that there was this whole system of Buddhist psychology called the Abhidharma. When I started to read a little bit about it, it was fascinating. Of course, I was in Graduate School for neuroscience so this was a "Wow," you know, "I wanna hear more." I started attending these talks by Robin Korman on the Abhidharma, and all of a sudden, I just started attending the Asana Mahamudra feast practice, which was open to all. I realised then that I love ritual. I loved the whole trappings of religion. It is something I very much enjoy and it feels enriching to life in general. As I became more familiar with the Dharma itself, I found it so rich. Compared to anything else I had studied, it really clicked with me. It was so beautiful. And I think that is how.

**Khandro:** So, you were actually at Graduate School when you opened up to Buddhism through Robin Korman. Did that really direct how you were going to use your qualifications in research?

**Julie:** It did, yes. I actually became interested in neuroscience in an almost metaphysical way. I had read some books by Francis Crick. I'd partnered with Kristof Creak and wrote a book on consciousness. Francis Crick was one of the co-discoverers of the DNA structure, so after DNA was solved, I thought let's

go for consciousness. And to me, it had a spiritual aspect to begin with, but this was amplified by the fact I had done a dathun—a month long retreat, and I also met Traleg Rinpoche during that period, as well as getting connected with Mind and Life organisation. In fact, Robin Korman had been friends with Francisco Varela from Mind and Life and he got me in. Francisco allowed me, after a personal correspondence, to go to a closed small meeting that was in Madison Wisconsin. And I entered Ritchie Davidson's lab around that time as well. So, some of my interest and experience in meditation retreats became part of my qualifications for being able to not only understand neuroscience, but also have the experience to be able to interpret meditation related data.

**Khandro:** Wow, amazing. And so, you've carried on throughout your career to look predominantly at the effect of meditation on the brain and so forth? Or is it broader than that?

**Julie:** It's broader than that, but almost not necessarily completely by choice. At times I've had to collaborate with people who had different interests. My husband got a position and then I sort of had a second post-doc in which I learnt some new tools related to physiology and EEG, and then I did some other research. So, I'm kind of hoping to circle back to meditation's effect on the brain. I currently do some work with people who are wanting to study meditation or maybe learn compassion meditation. So I've been working with people without meditation experience.

**Khandro:** Very interesting. You came to the Buddhist Summer School 2023, and quite a lot of what you were talking about had to do with communicating aspects of Buddhism to the secular world, and keeping it in a secular context. I don't know if you wanted to speak a bit more about that?

**Julie:** Sure. When I entered Richie Davidson's lab it was maybe 2002/2003, and he told me he had an interest in



having me as a post-doc. But he had to give me a warning that at that point in time, mindfulness and meditation were still considered fringe. And he was suggesting, “You might ruin your career.” He apparently gave that speech to multiple people coming into his lab during that period of time to do research with meditation. But since that time, mindfulness and meditation have really exploded. In fact, in some domains, it’s gone in directions that are sometimes wonderful, sometimes baffling, and sometimes a little bit of “eyebrows raised.” Sometimes it’s a stripped-down version where they take out the compassion meditation, they take out the ethics, and it could potentially be used in ways that maybe aren’t the most helpful—maybe even not so helpful. So, I feel that by having a foot in a lineage tradition, I am able to speak a little bit to both sides. Or bring a little bit of the experience that comes from the richer experience of the Dharma, studying Abhidharma, studying all the different traditions, rather than just by taking a certification course of some kind. I have kind of a depth. I still feel there is some value for those of us who are in that Buddhist space to be able to share. The Dalai Lama himself has said on multiple occasions, and very emphatically, and I do believe he’s completely genuine when he says this, he does not want to convert people. And I really feel that what I want to bring, and this is maybe difficult to put into words, is a way of bringing secular aspects of the Dharma to be able to help people. In a way, that is maybe a bit more full, a bit more rich, but still maintains that secular division, so that it’s not making people feel that they have to believe in Buddhism. They can complement their own religion or a lack of religion. I think that’s very important as we move into this global space of people of all different faiths and nationalities doing these practices.

**Khandro:** Yes, I think that’s wonderful. Just very briefly I’ll mention that I was speaking to a Lama and he said that for a Buddhist Centre to offer puja and so on, that when somebody comes in because they’re having to deal with stress and anxiety and aren’t coping, he said that’s what we need to now address—making

sure that people are ok. And he was a monastic, and I thought that was a huge confirmation for what you’re saying.

**Julie:** Yeah, there’s something about the modern world, and the pandemic has certainly exacerbated this, but people are struggling on such a large scale. And there are certain critics of the mindfulness movement that almost want to chuck it out. They are speaking of it in such a way like, “Oh it’s just harmful and you should just chuck the whole thing,” and I don’t believe that. I have seen the studies and seen potential benefits. But I also see how it can become unbalanced. I think it probably needs a revision, but I think that there are a lot of people that have benefited, and it could still be quite a powerful tool. As long as it remains

**“New people are meeting Traleg Rinpoche’s teachings and it is neat to see people go through that same experience that I did early on, where you just gradually see the depth of the Dharma unfolding and realise, “Wow.” I mean the more deeply you get into it, the more beautiful and all-encompassing it is.”**

enriched in empathy and love and compassion, which are still a very big part of it, not just an optional aspect. Because I do think that can be problematic. And I think that it would miss out on some of the healing potential if those things were pushed to the side.

**Khandro:** Yeah. Very important words Julie. It would be great to hear a little bit about when you first met Traleg Rinpoche, some special moments, or perhaps to speak about what you feel his legacy has become?

**Julie:** Sure. I met Rinpoche at the same Shambhala centre. There was a group of us from Milwaukee, and it was just interesting that we were kind of all in that same space and time. We have scattered to different parts of the U.S. but when we were in Milwaukee, we would travel out to see Traleg Rinpoche in New York where the Centre was in the United States. It was just a very special time. It was around 10 years or so that Rinpoche came to the US and we would attend his

workshops in Wisconsin or Chicago, and would travel to New York State. It was one of those environments that felt very personable, like you really had an amazing amount of access as well as feeling very contained in the whole spirit of the teaching.

Some of the teachings were on Mahamudra of course, but one particular retreat that is striking to me was Rinpoche’s first 10-day Lojong retreat—the longest retreat that he had done in the US at that time. I remember knowing that he was going to be doing a longer retreat and being very excited, and then almost having a little bit of disappointment at the topic, “Oh I thought it was going to be on Mahamudra or high teachings.” But it ended up being one of the most

meaningful retreats I have gone on in my life, really. The way that it showed the enormous resource that we have in every single moment, every single second of our entire lives to be used towards Dharma and evolving our characters was just very eye opening. I feel every time I revisit Lojong, I learn even more, but I continue to marvel at how impressive that experience was and how enriched all our lives were.

It was just a great group of people too. It was a really nice melding of people from the different places in the US as well as from the Australian sangha. There was just something very special. That often happened, but this one was just a beautiful amalgamation.

And then in terms of legacy, I had a regular study group that met in Milwaukee, and when I moved to West Virginia, Traleg Rinpoche had me continue the study group there. Rinpoche wanted it to be very egalitarian in a sense. Someone would host the study group and

they would provide tea and maybe a little snack of cookies or something like that, as well as mediation and discussion, making sure people stayed on topic. And there was a sense of hospitality and responsibility that developed in West Virginia. These days, I think I do more of the mediation, but we still do mostly the round robin style of going to different people's homes and giving people a chance to host, and it's amazing how much people really enjoy that aspect. Sometimes even newcomers will jump at the chance of hosting and really enjoy having people come into their homes and listen to and discuss the Dharma. Now it's gone into the whole expansiveness of being able to do the hybrid format—in person as well as

online—so we are kind of moving into a new era. New people are meeting Traleg Rinpoche's teachings and it is neat to see people go through that same experience that I did early on, where you just gradually see the depth of the Dharma unfolding and realise, "Wow." I mean the more deeply you get into it, the more beautiful and all-encompassing it is. It can be quite a marvel, and it's fun to see that both in myself and vicariously as new people come to the Dharma.

**Khandro:** It's wonderful that you have kept your study group activity going for such a long time. I really feel that, after Rinpoche passing in particular, your activities have helped give E-Vam's US activities a great deal of consistency and

depth. So, I want to thank you for your commitment to that. It's really wonderful. E-Vam wouldn't be the same after Rinpoche's passing as it is now without your activity. So, I just acknowledge that and thank you.

**Julie:** Oh, thank you. Rinpoche always said slow and steady. I don't have a giant empire and I don't really try to do that, just because that was the instruction Rinpoche gave, not to try to go too big.

**Khandro:** Right, quality all the way. Thank you so much for your time and agreeing to being interviewed. And thank you so much for making the trip to Australia in January for the Summer School. ■

## News from E-Vam Institute



from the Venerable Ringu Tulku Rinpoche. Rinpoche gave a weekend course providing teachings on Mahamudra on Saturday and teaching on the Chenrezig practice on Sunday. This was such a special event; it was evident from the heartfelt reactions from all who attended that we were in the presence of such a remarkably down-to-earth and effective teacher, so eloquent, with teachings so helpful and relatable.

In March, we welcomed in the Tibetan New Year gathering for a "Losar and Chenrezig Puja," a lovely community event with many new faces and also some

2023 kicked off with an incredible milestone: The 40th Anniversary of the Buddhist Summer School—a real triumph on so many levels, this year streaming for the first time live from Maitripa Centre, with a stellar 12 teacher line up, including such distinguished teachers as: Venerable Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche, Ajahn Hasapañña, Ekai Korematsu Roshi, just to name a few. Online and in-person participants freely explored teachings of diverse traditions from Zen, Theravadin, Tibetan, and Western perspectives, with topics ranging from—What is Buddhism?; How happiness is a choice; Dependent Origination and Compassion; Self-acceptance in meditation; Zen Calligraphy; Shobogenzo's discussion on

Life and Death; The exploration of Buddhism's convergence with Science; The latest in mental health interventions; and Exploring the Postsecular Sacred! The atmosphere of this 40th Summer School proved to be particularly current and a real celebration of the offering that this yearly institution has provided for an amazing 40 years. Thank you to all our esteemed teachers for all your dynamic insight and offering and for the incredible efforts of all the volunteers who made this event so successful and enjoyable. Furthermore, I express deep gratitude to the great vision of Traleg Rinpoche the IX, who is responsible for the creation of such a beneficial forum.

In February, E-Vam was blessed again with the opportunity of hosting a visit







charmingly familiar faces. It was a unique chance to practice together and chat and have some cake afterwards!

Also in March, we had a special visit from Hazel Bercholz, who conducted a beautiful Dharma Art course, a hands-on course with Hazel intimating the Dharmic Art view, with teachings handed down from her teacher, the great Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. As part of these teachings, the participants had the chance to apply this view and approach to their own designs of Ikebana-inspired flower arrangements—a very practical and resonant course.

In April, we held our Annual Easter Retreat online and in-person at the beautiful Maitripa Centre and despite the rain, it was so inspiring to see a full gompa and a healthy online group joining us to retreat from home, everyone coming together to take the time to diligently

study and practice. It was so special to see people settle into E-Vam style retreat, integrated with lots of meditation and then applying mindfulness in their activities off the cushion; Karma Yoga, Chenrezig, Green Tara Practices, and

meaningful Dharmic conversations—it was such a conducive atmosphere.

Towards the end of April, the Traleg Rinpoche Book Club finished reading Rinpoche’s “How to Do Life” (congratulations). Also, we held a “Day of Teachings and Practice,” where during a

day of meditation, participants listened to Traleg Rinpoche’s incisive teachings explaining what Buddhism means by “mindfulness.” This course then led into a new initiative at E-Vam with a consistent weekly meditation course held online and at the centre.

On behalf of the centre, I would like to express my deep appreciation to all the volunteers who have made such a meaningful program possible. Thank you for all your positive motivation and joyful work in coming together to help create such a rich program. I would also like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to all the incredible teachers who continue to teach at E-Vam Institute. Also, to express our deep gratitude to Traleg Rinpoche for establishing such a wonderful format, which through the centre’s activities, we continue to follow. ■

*Mark Dawson*



## News from E-Vam Institute Board

At the start of the year, the E-Vam board shared various goals for 2023. These included; the continual growth of E-Vam, which covers offering Rinpoche’s teaching programs, digitising them and making them more available to the members, the continual upkeep of Maitripa and encouraging increased business, and looking after our regular customers. Board members also aim to further develop their skill set and output to be of better service to E-Vam. We do this with the intention of keeping Rinpoche’s spirit alive, and having a thriving Centre for Traleg Yangsi Rinpoche to return to.

We have had quite a number of repairs and upkeeps of the buildings at E-Vam and Maitripa this year. We have also upgraded the Wi-Fi at Maitripa, and replaced all the

mattresses. Despite these larger than expected expenses, our finances are on track for a positive 2023 financial year. This is possible thanks to a very successful 2023 Buddhist Summer School, and other well-attended programs. Also Maitripa and E-Vam continue to be a popular place for other spiritual and Yoga groups to hire.

The board would like to thank Lisa Blaze who is kindly helping Pradipo Luy with our much needed bookkeeping service. And thank you to all of you who have been attending the many programs that have been on offer, including the November and Easter retreats, the Buddhist Summer School, and many other courses and programs featuring Traleg Rinpoche’s teachings. ■

*Matthew Hassett*

# News from Nyima Tashi Buddhist Centre Auckland, New Zealand



Compassion: what is it and how does it arise, which led to a very lively and engaging debate. We will remember for some time a wonderful story told by Tamiaho about his Great Uncle, his Aunt, and a Christmas cake which beautifully illustrated the manifestation of Compassion as it is borne in relationship within Māori epistemology.

Nyima Tashi continues to run the weekly meditation class, which is supported by a strong quorum of regular attendees. Ani Jangchub has been offering short courses on the weekends to enliven topics that sit at the very heart of Buddhist practice as it was so faithfully illuminated by Traleg Rinpoche over many decades. Recent courses included an Introduction to Meditation and there is an upcoming course on Compassion.

Recently, students of Nyima Tashi participated in a three-day retreat as part of the urban retreat programme. The topic of the retreat was “Mindful Living” and featured a full series of talks given by Traleg Rinpoche at Nyima Tashi in 2011. The retreat included instruction on ritual practice and Pranayama.

Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou katoa—Greetings to you all from Aotearoa/New Zealand.

It feels like a while since we have had a chance to share what’s been happening here at Nyima Tashi.

In January we were also most honoured to receive Za Choeje Rinpoche to Teach at Nyima Tashi one evening while He was visiting His dedicated New Zealand sangha. Rinpoche taught eloquently on the topic of Mindfulness from the Buddhist perspective. We were especially delighted to receive Rinpoche at Nyima Tashi as this was the first Teacher of His standing to be in-person at the Centre for several years.

Shortly afterwards, we were so joyful to welcome Ringu Tulku Rinpoche to Nyima Tashi. Rinpoche taught at Nyima Tashi on Mahamudra view as it is elucidated in the Kagyu Lineage prayer Dorje Chang Thungma. We were so touched by Rinpoche’s kind and quiet ways, but also His tireless wish to Teach and to be available to talk with students. We look forward to welcoming Rinpoche back to Nyima Tashi once again in the future.

The 12th Auckland Buddhist Summer School in March welcomed a panel of

Teachers of noble and diverse backgrounds. Teachers for this year included Khenpo Ngawang Sangye (Kagyü lineage), Geshe Wangchen Thupten, Chagdud Khadro, The Very Reverend Anne Mills, Tamiaho Herangi-Searancke, and Dr Mary Miller. The theme for the Opening Forum was



*Photos of this year’s Buddhist Summer School, the panel of teachers were Geshe Thubten Wangchen, The Very Reverend Anne Mills, Tamiaho Herangi-Searancke, and Dr Mary Miller. Ringu Tulku Rinpoche, pictured here with Lama Dorji from the Palpung Centre, Ani Jangchub Lhamo and members of the Nyima Tashi Sangha.*



*From the retreat flyer:*

“Mindfulness is not practiced simply to develop some sense of calmness of the mind but to have a deeper understanding of ourselves in relation to our way of thinking, feeling and our emotional states. The intention of mindfulness is not simply to transform the mind but to transform the mind so that this will impact on how we relate to ourselves, our body and to other beings in terms of our actions.”

We wished to offer an update on the

“Insight to Wellbeing Initiative,” which has been bubbling away in the background for some time now. We are looking this year to develop a programme which will be designed specifically for staff and inmates within the Corrections system in Auckland. We look forward to updating you on this.

Nyima Tashi offers accommodation on booking.com, so please consider this as you

plan your next urban retreat for practice or if you are just planning a visit to Tāmaki Makaurau/ Auckland. In addition to accommodation, the Centre also hires out spaces for events—we have a regular course, happening in blocks over the coming months, The Art of Kundalini Yoga. Contact Vivian if you're interested in joining (the accompanying flyer advertises the May 2023 dates, but there are more dates coming). ■



## News from Maitripa Centre



As the great Beech tree leaves turn red and begin to fall, the Maitripa peak season comes to a close. It's been a fantastic season, with a great number of events and many happy retreatants. Here's a quick recap:

We started off 2023 with the 40th annual Buddhist Summer School. It was a great delight to have the honour of hosting this magnificent event again under the auspices of Traleg Rinpoche and E-Vam Institute. With teachers coming in-person and online, our new internet infrastructure did an amazing job of streaming the event across the world. Thank you to all the staff and volunteers for helping run such a special event.

Other groups that followed on in 2023 were Divine Grace, who held two successful weekend retreats in a row, One Heart Yoga with Aruna Giri, Sparkly Yoga, Interplay Family Therapy, One Heart with Anahata, Illumine Nation, School for FM Alexander Studies, Underwood Healing—a new group focused on sound healing, Mindfulness Training Institute of Australia

conducted their annual seven day silent meditation retreat, The Healing Academy and Brunswick Women's Choir, who held their annual weekend rehearsal intensive.

Sangha members Bill Howes, Anthony Cramer, David Macadams, Mike Tahana, and Sharon Wells, have each helped with many improvements around the property, including cosmetic fixes to Rinpoche's stupa, cleaning the retaining wall around the fountain, tree debris clean-up and various repairs and maintenance tasks. A big thanks to each of you for your valuable help and ongoing support of Maitripa Centre.

During the annual Easter Retreat, we had several volunteers help with gardening and clearing up the walking track which is enjoyed by so many throughout the year. Thank you to everyone involved with that project. It was also great to have Jarrah Wishart stay at Maitripa and help out in the kitchen at the last minute with MTIA's seven day silent retreat.

We still have plenty of events coming up over the next few months and we are also planning more renovations and improvements to be completed during this time. We look forward to welcoming everyone to Maitripa again soon. ■

*Daniel Blaze*



# News from E-Vam Buddhist Institute U.S.



*Lama Jinpa at Saranam Retreat Centre for E-Vam's annual Retreat.*

contemplating the slogans. It was a fulfilling time to spend online together.

We are excited to be finally resuming our annual in-person Retreats this year, "Path Of Mahamudra." This year's retreat will be held at Saranam Retreat Centre, 12-15 May in West Virginia. Lama Jinpa from the KTD Sangha will be leading the Retreat, supported by Julie Brefczynski Lewis. Kyle Weaner will also be providing Tibetan Yoga sessions over the weekend. It will be a wonderful opportunity to study Rinpoche's teachings, meditate together, and enjoy the peace and serenity that the Saranam Centre provides.

### Activities coming up:

On the weekend, 26-27 May I will be conducting a weekend Tibetan Yoga "Chime Palter" course online. Beginning Tuesday July 11 at 7pm NY time, Lama Jinpa will be resuming his series on Traleg Rinpoche's "Moonbeams Of Mahamudra" study group for six consecutive Tuesdays. Please email [office@evam.org](mailto:office@evam.org) for more details. Thanks to all attendees and contributors to E-Vam. It has been a great start to the year. Wishing all our Retreat attendees a wonderful four-day retreat. ■

*Traleg Khandro*

From March through to early May this year Julie Brefczynski Lewis and I became part of the curriculum team presenting for the Rime Society in Boulder Colorado, an online course based on Traleg Rinpoche's book "Mind At Ease," known also in Australia as Luminous Bliss. Along with presenters Clarke Warren and Bob King from the Rime Society, we took participants quite systematically through Mind At Ease, highlighting the many poignant and profound teachings it contains. It was a wonderful opportunity for sharing, study,

and discussion. I want to thank everyone at Rime Society for inviting our contribution to their course this year.

At E-Vam US, beginning in March, we held our first online course for the year called "Replenishing The Heart." Each Tuesday evening for six weeks, we focused on Rinpoche's Lojong teachings. The course emphasised the importance of following Rinpoche's advice, to ensure one includes oneself when seeking to develop compassion for all beings. We listened to Rinpoche's audio teachings, studied his wonderful Lojong book, and practiced





# News from Shogam Publications



We are busy developing some beautiful books here at Shogam. So a little later in the year, we will be making some announcements about the new books coming out for 2023-24. As well, in conjunction with E-Vam, work is well and truly underway for *The Journal Of Integral Buddhism*, Volume 2, due for release at the Buddhist Summer School 2024. Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche's wish was that the Journal of Integral Buddhism celebrate diverse ideas and approaches within the Buddhist tradition. Volume 1 includes a remarkable group of contributors and beautiful array of topics including, wellness and well-being from a Buddhist perspective; a study of Master Sekitō Kisen's Sandōkai verses from the Soto tradition; An insightful and comparative discussion of mindfulness, its traditional Buddhist roots and the broader context of mindfulness in the Western context; A historical journey of some of the writings of fifth century Theravada Buddhist translator and philosopher, Buddhaghosa; Exploring what is meant by an ethical life, drawing from the Western philosophical and Buddhist traditions, and more.

We are very proud of our latest publication, *The Circle of the Sun: Heart Essence of Dzogchen* by Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche.

*The Circle of the Sun* is a succinct elucidation of the theoretical framework, the pith instructions of Dzogchen. Traleg Kyabgon's translation and commentary of the 17th century Tibetan Dzogchen master Tsele Natsok Rangdrol, provides a uniquely modern perspective of this ancient text, bringing the theoretical framework of Dzogchen—Tekcho or cutting through, and Thogal or leaping over—to life.

Here is a quote:

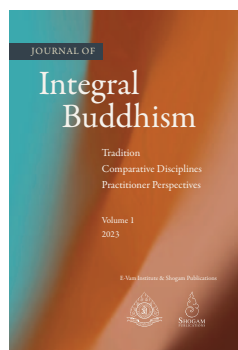
***“In this context the ground of being should be understood as having none of the characteristics of “thinghood,” which avoids the extreme of eternalism. However, the ground of being has various qualities in abundance, which are spontaneously present. Thus it does not fall into the extreme of nihilism, the category of nonexistence. What is referred to as “the ground of being,” consists of the coexistence of emptiness, which is the sphere of reality, and authentic wisdom. These two aspects of the ultimate reality coexist in such a manner that they do not come together as two entities, and they are not separable. What the ground of being is in actuality cannot be fully articulated through the use of words and language, since it is not different from dharmakaya or the authentic aspect of buddha’s being. So the ground of being is perceived as being primordially pure, free from corruption and embellishment.”***

*The Circle of the Sun* is available at Akshara Bookshop at E-Vam Institute in Carlton and at the moment, our friends at Namse Bangdzo USA bookstore have a special price for *The Circle of the Sun*: <https://www.namsebangdzo.com/Circle-Of-The-Sun-Heart-Essence-of-Dzogchen-p/9780648686385.htm> ■

Felicity Lodro

# News from Akshara Bookstore

After commemorating the 40th Buddhist Summer School, it is my pleasure to highlight a magnificent new publication from Shogam Publications titled “The Journal of Integral Buddhism.”

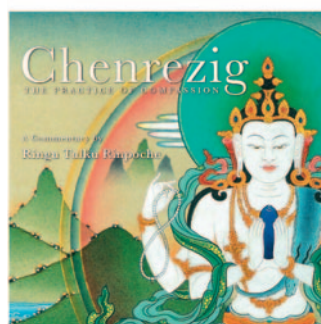


Exemplifying the rich diversity of teachers and teachings that the Buddhist Summer School continues to offer, just check out this wonderful selection of teachings!

- Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX Health and Well-being: A Buddhist Perspective
- Ekai Korematsu Roshi Sandōkai—Harmony of Difference and Equality
- Kathleen Gregory—Exploring the Radical Psychology of Buddhism
- Bhante Tejadhammo—Finding the Best Dwelling Place for the Mind in Meditation
- Sam Bercholz—Not Being Afraid of Who You Are: The Path of Bravery, Compassion, and Gentleness
- Dechen Davies—The Joy of Meditation: Building the Foundations to Sustain Your Practice

Recently, we hosted Ringu Tulku Rinpoche and Rinpoche taught on the practice of Chenrezig. We currently practice the wonderful Sadhana on a monthly basis and the book *Chenrezig—The Practice of Compassion*, is a wonderful resource to help deepen one’s connection with the practice.

## Chenrezig—The Practice of Compassion by Ringu Tulku Rinpoche



The book is in three sections:

### The Commentary

Ringu Tulku’s accessible commentary on the sadhana is full of clarity, sound advice and warmth of language on how we can enhance and extend our loving kindness and compassion. How to feel, how to visualize, how to

aspire to our true compassionate nature; how to clear our negativities and let our inner selves shine out and benefit ourselves and all other beings; and to open up our hearts and minds to greater loving kindness.

### The Sadhana

The sadhana is complete with the Tibetan script, the phonetics for this script and the English translation. This makes it easy to understand and to chant or say in Tibetan or English.

### The Commemoration of Rigul

The third part of this book is commemorating Rigul, Kham, Tibet, the birthplace and homeland of Ringu Tulku Rinpoche, the abbot of Rigul Monastery. It is with such good news of the flourishing of the Dharma in Rigul that this book has come into being. ■

*Mark Dwson*





# E-Vam Institute Winter Teaching Program 2023

**Weekly Meditation**  
Wednesdays till 24th May  
6.00pm-6.45pm  
In-person and on-line



The weekly practice series offers the opportunity to begin or renew your practice in a welcoming and supportive environment. With meditation instructions as provided by Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX, these sessions can nourish our motivation to practice by practising with others.

**Do Tulku Rinpoche on the Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra: The Way of the Bodhisattva**  
Thursday 1st, 8th, and 15th June  
Wednesday 21st June  
7.30-9.00pm  
On-line



In Mahayana Buddhism, the vision of the Bodhisattva inspires us to realise our own potential. Presented as a personal meditation, the text by Shantideva focuses on cultivating a mind happy and content when directed to wishing to benefit others. We

are fortunate to have Do Tulku Rinpoche return this year to continue his teachings following the text. Known for his learned, interactive, often unconventional and humorous way of teaching, Rinpoche brings the text to life providing both the inspiration and guidance we need to bring compassion and wisdom together on the Path.

*Please note that you can join the series at any point.*

**An Evening and Day of Teachings and Practice—  
The Mindfulness Living Series Part 2**  
Friday 30th June 7.30pm-9.00pm  
Saturday 1st July 9.30am- 4.30pm



In this series of talks, Rinpoche explains why we meditate in Buddhism and provides a corrective to popular misconceptions of mindfulness. In doing so, he inspires us to practice. The Evening and Day of Teachings and Practice is a

quarterly series that includes meditation sessions and teachings from Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX.

**Annual Winter Zen Course with Ekai Korematsu Roshi**  
Friday 7th, 14th, 21st & 28th July  
7.30pm-9.00pm  
In-person and on-line



Continuing the annual tradition as requested by Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX, Ekai Roshi will teach on the Shōbōgenzō by the Great Master Eihei Dogen. Please check our website for further information.

**Chenrezig Puja**  
First Friday of every month  
7.30-8.30pm  
On-line and in-person

In times of great confusion and suffering in the world, gathering together to invoke Chenrezig who embodies compassion, is a means to care for both others and ourselves from the spiritual point of view.

**Buddhism for Under 35s Presents:  
Under 35s Urban One-Day Retreat  
At E-Vam Institute**  
Every last Sunday of each Month



As part of E-Vam Institute's ongoing Under 35s Program, join other like-minded people as we explore the integrated approach to Buddhist Practice including all aspects of Meditation, Wisdom, and Ethics. Led by experienced teachers, the Under 35s Urban Retreat includes: mindfulness

meditation, Tibetan yoga and pranayama, and audio teachings from Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX.

Please check our website for details for the September retreat at Maitripa Contemplative Centre and online.

**PLAN AHEAD**

**Annual  
Buddhist  
Summer  
School**

**13-16th January 2024**





