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The Teacher Student Relationship in Buddhism

Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX



Talk given by Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX in 1999, Canberra.



The concept and the role of the teacher in Buddhism is considered very important, we could say that without the help of teacher it is practically impossible to follow the Buddhist path effectively. Many people may be sceptical of the whole concept of gurus and teachers and so on, because people have this notion that all teachers may have the potential to exploit the gullible, the weak and confused.

Many people come wanting to learn about Buddhism without having to really commit oneself to a teacher or teachers - and that is understandable. It is good to be sceptical but that does not mean we can do without having teachers at all, because as samsaric beings, ordinary human beings, our minds are not clear (often referred to in Buddhism as mental afflictions and distortions). Due to the confusion we experience on many

different levels we do not see things clearly, and we cannot make our minds up or become fully clear about things generally by ourselves – we need guidance, we need assistance.

In Buddhism, the teacher role is to help us overcome our limitations, not to add to them. The teachers are there to liberate us from the very bondage that we have created for ourselves, not to enslave us more. The role of the teacher is the role of a liberator because the teacher needs to have the capacity and the skill to bring us out of our confused state, within the bondage of the samsaric condition. That's why in Buddhist teachings the teachers are compared to a guide, or to the captain of a ship. If we are going to travel to a foreign land or country and if we do not know anything about the place, if we have a guide then that guide can show us around

and can prevent us from being cheated, lost, and can help us avoid having to deal with all kinds of problems that can occur when in a new place.

So, in a similar fashion, if we try to follow any kind of spiritual path on our own the chances of going off the track, getting lost, misinterpreting our experiences and misunderstanding the teachings and the practices that we are trying to implement, are that much greater. If we have the guidance of a teacher then we can ask questions, we can clarify things and the teacher then can give us certain specific practices to do, and then when we encounter certain difficulties with the meditation practices that we are doing, the teacher can give us specific instructions to deal with those difficulties as they arise. They can shed light on all kinds of things that we may be engaged in on the path.

Over time we need to be able to develop trust in the guide. If we don't trust the guide we won't get any benefit from

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having such guidance, but people always say, 'How can I have complete trust in a teacher?' One may not be able to have complete trust in the teacher at the beginning but the trust has to develop over a period of time because, as in normal secular situations with guides, there are good guides and bad guides; there are guides who have just become guides and experienced guides who have been doing this job for thirty, forty, fifty years. Similarly, in Buddhism also we have many different teachers depending upon where we are at in terms of our meditation practices and study – we have the *acarya*, the *kalyanamitra* and the *vajracarya* – and these teachers play different roles in correspondence to our level of spiritual experience and aptitude.

The role of the *acarya* is to inform and impart teachings because, at the beginning, first we have to know what Buddhist teachings are all about. We have to understand what Buddhists have to say about the notion of the self - 'Who am I?'

'What am I?' - and what Buddhists have to say about ultimate reality. We have to understand what Buddhists have to say about the relationship between our everyday experience of the world and absolute truth, ultimate reality. We have to understand the many different traditions and practices of Buddhism - we have to become familiar with them. We do this by receiving teachings from the *acarya* – *acarya* in Sanskrit, *slob dpon* (*loppon*) in Tibetan.

As one goes deeper into the meditational practice then the teacher becomes the *kalyanamitra* or spiritual friend. For people who are familiar with geshe in the Gelugpa tradition – geshe is short for *dge-ba'i bshes-gnyen* which means spiritual friend. As one advances with one's practice then the practitioner generates, what is called, bodhicitta, the enlightened heart, and the teacher then becomes the *kalyanamitra*, our spiritual friend, who encourages us to develop love and compassion towards others. The

kalyanamitra also has the authority to grant the bodhisattva precepts.

Then, finally, when the practitioner has matured enough to embark on the tantric path, the teacher becomes the *vajracarya* or *rdo rje slob dpon* (*dorje loppon*) in Tibetan. The role of the teacher changes. In that way, we should not be thinking that all the teachers are the same – they are not the same. It depends upon context, it depends upon the individual and it depends upon the relationship that the student has established with a specific teacher. It could be that one and the same teacher is playing all three roles of being an *acarya*, a *kalyanamitra* and also a *vajra* master or *vajracarya* because, with some [students], the teacher may be an *acarya*, with others, a *kalyanamitra*, and with yet others, a *vajracarya*. When we have just embarked on the path we can have many *acaryas*, many teachers, who we can learn from, and we can also have many *kalyanamitras*, but when it comes to the *vajracarya*, we can have many *vajracaryas*

also but we have to have one special *vajracarya* who then becomes, what we call, our root guru. In the tantric context we can have many tantric masters but we have to have one tantric root master, what we call the root master, the *tsawai lama* (Tibetan). It also means the principal master, the one with whom one has established a special bond. In that way, our level of trust should grow.

As I mentioned, it is not the case that we have to have one hundred percent trust in someone right at the beginning - just throw oneself into the situation just like that, without preparation, without really understanding the teacher. The teacher has not had time to assess the student and the student has not had time to assess the teacher. The student and the teacher have to be compatible because just as there are many different kinds of students, there are just as many different kinds of teachers, teachers with different personalities, different characteristics, different styles - there has to be some kind of match between the student and the teacher.

This is emphasised in traditional teachings also, because as it is said, in the case of Milarepa - Milarepa being one of the foremost saints and poets of old Tibet – when he became interested in taking up some kind of serious spiritual practice, first, he was sent to a Dzogchen master and he spent some time with him - but they didn't click. Even though the Dzogchen master was very kind to him and he was very pleasant to be with and he gave him teachings generously, Milarepa didn't really feel connected to him. Then he went to Marpa. Even when he heard the name 'Marpa' the hair on the back of his neck stood up – he got goose-bumps, it is said – just from hearing the name 'Marpa' had that effect on him. Subsequently, he went to find Marpa. Marpa was a very difficult man to begin with, and he was very difficult with Milarepa in particular. But Milarepa wouldn't go away, he came back for more no matter how hard Marpa was on him! So there has to be that kind of compatibility between the teacher and the student for the greatest opportunities and benefits to arise. Some people may think that if anyone has had any kind of spiritual realisation that they will display the same qualities, the same attributes, the same



characteristics as other realized being, but that is not true. There is a great diversity in how realization manifests.

After having found the teacher that one has been looking for, then it is said that one should be assessing the teacher and the teacher should be assessing the student also. It's not the case that simply because there has been some kind of, what we call, karmic connection that there should be no assessment or scrutiny. According to Buddhism, we click with a teacher or teachers because of a karmic connection. WE find a connection with some teachers and not with others. That is the case with normal people we encounter in life generally too. We click with some people and we don't click with others. So, it is important that we spend time to get to know the teacher to see if it will be workable or not, and if it's workable then, according to tantric teachings, we should stick with that teacher.

In the course of our relationship with the teacher, again, it is not supposed to be all smooth sailing. As in all relationships there are ups and downs and the role of the teacher is not always to make the student feel good. The role of the teacher is also to awaken the student, more than just simply giving comfort to the student, like a counsellor or a therapist or similar.

The teacher also, from time to time, can

be confrontational, provocative, unsettling and sometimes probably even bewildering – you don't know why this person is approaching things in this way. When a teacher is well qualified and well motivated everything is done with, what we call, skillful means or *skill in means*. If we are lucky to have found a really good teacher then that teacher is dealing with everyone with skill in means. With normal, ordinary human beings like us - we are predictable. As samsaric beings we may tend to relate to different people in a similar way, but a skilled teacher relates to different people differently or the same people differently, in relation to what is most needed for the student. When this is done skillfully the teacher is helping the person, the student to wake up. If the same old patterns are repeated over and over without clarity being injected then there is less of a chance of a break-through. We often need help to step out of our habitual patterns and preconceived notions.

I'm sure many of you have read biographies of great Buddhist masters all doing different things to wake people up. So, in that sense, the compassion that the teachers display can take on many different forms. In other words, compassionate action on the part of the teacher may not look like a compassionate

act initially, but it may very much be a compassionate act. At other times, when we think the teacher should be really harsh on some students, especially if there is a community of spiritual, like-minded people like a sangha, then sometimes the majority of the people might be thinking that one particular student needs to be put in his or her place and they may report to the teacher and say, 'This person is like this and like that and causes so many problems in the community'. But the teacher may not act on it to the disappointment and bewilderment of everybody in the community.

There is a Zen story – in this particular Zen temple there was a monk and he was a kleptomaniac. He couldn't stop himself from stealing things from other monks, and everybody had had enough of this monk. They confronted him, they did everything possible and, still, nothing would work. Eventually, they approached the abbot and he was told about the problem that they were having with this monk. They thought he would act on it but the abbot didn't. So they approached him again and said, 'This is becoming a really big problem and if you don't do anything about it then, we're sorry to say, but we may have to leave – either he goes or we go'. The abbot said, 'I want you to call everyone into the Zendo this evening



and I'll sort this out'. So everybody turned up, and all the monks were waiting expectantly for him to kick this monk out of the monastery. The abbot looked at everyone and said, 'You all know stealing is wrong but this poor monk doesn't understand so he needs me'. Everybody was shocked. But because the teacher dealt with the situation in that manner, the story goes that the kleptomaniac suddenly didn't have to steal any more because he was so moved by this teacher's compassion, and he was transformed as a result.

The point is that Buddhist teachers are expected to use skill in means and skill in means is compassion, but compassion in Buddhism has a wider connotation than what we normally understand compassion to be. As I said, it's not only about being supportive, lending an ear or assisting someone materially, but compassion also has to be practiced in order to wake people up and to do that, just listening to their problems and so on, and being sympathetic with and showing empathy towards people, is not enough. That is not enough for that person to break out of whatever samsaric entrapment they have fallen into. For that, all kinds of other techniques are necessary which may be, as I said, unsettling or confrontational and so on. There are many methods used in

Buddhism traditionally to help free the mind and realise greater potentiality.

It is important to get a good grasp of the importance of this relationship in Buddhism. When it is properly understood, and when there is that real understanding and trust between the student and the teacher then one will understand what is going on, and the motivations behind the actions. Even if not understood fully, still, one can understand and appreciate what is involved, what is happening – and that is really very important. So, in that way, at least in Tibetan Buddhism, the teacher can play many different roles – being an *acarya*, *kalyanamitra* or *vajracarya* - and the teacher can also use many different methods, techniques and means to bring people to spiritual realisation.

Simply because certain kinds of traditional Buddhist practices that involve teacher/student relationships appear to be quite foreign to us and we may be anti-authority, or very sceptical about these kinds of things. As Buddhists, we need to look into it more instead of just simply discarding all of this and saying, 'We are all equal, there is no-one who is superior and there's no-one who's inferior, we are all the same'. We are not all the same and we do need heroes and heroines, we do need people that we can look up to and we

do need people that we can use as models so that we can emulate them, so that we may be able to become like them. This is very important because, as we know as human beings, relationships are very important and most of our problems come from relationships - relationships between parents and children, relationships between siblings, relationships between spouses, employer/employee relationships, relationships in the work environment, and so on.

The relationship that one develops with a teacher has the potential to help us to be able to relate to other human beings better. How so? If we are able to have a really good, genuine kind of relationship with a genuine teacher then our mind will be more focussed, more aware, less susceptible to emotional conflicts, conceptual confusion, and we will be able to see things more clearly. And if we can become like our teachers then we'd be better human beings. Not only would we become better human beings but we would also be spiritually advanced human beings whose capacity to help other people, other beings, is not limited to only doing good things but also being able to help them spiritually. So for these reasons we do need spiritual teachers, we do need someone to look up to, and we are not all

the same. This is true even in sport. If you are into playing cricket or tennis or whatever, then you have to look up to the greatest tennis players or cricket greats and you have to respect and listen to your coach.

So, similarly, in spiritual practice also we have to have a teacher, a guide, an escort, like the captain of a ship, so that we would be able to move away from the samsaric condition that we are immersed in and gradually move towards enlightenment, spiritual realisation. Moving away from the samsaric condition is an enlightening, liberating experience itself. In other words, enlightenment is not a state to be attained, but as we move away from our samsaric condition we are already becoming enlightened and this is made possible because of our spiritual teachers.

In Buddhism, the teacher is important because of their qualities, the exceptional qualities that they possess. More importantly, the teacher is also the embodiment of the lineage that the teacher belongs to. We need to avoid the extremes of one, having no room for teachers, or two becoming completely obsessed with following a particular teacher so a certain kind of personality cult develops around a particular teacher. We want to avoid the teacher becoming all important and the lineage and tradition receding into the background. The real legitimacy and authenticity of the teacher comes from the lineage, from the tradition. It's very important for us to appreciate that.

What the teacher is transmitting is the collection of wisdom contained in the hundreds of years old tradition which has been passed down from generation to generation. The teacher then is seen as the embodiment of and the spokesperson for that lineage. The teacher and the lineage have to be seen as inseparable. It is not because the teacher is great that the lineage becomes legitimate and authentic but the teacher is validated and has become authentic because the lineage and the tradition is pure and because it is authentic, has a long history, and because the teachings contained in the tradition have been preserved by a series of great masters. These great yogis preserve the pure teachings, the pure tradition, and

because of that the teachers themselves become genuine, authentic and legitimate.

If we are lucky enough to have teachers like that then we should see ourselves as being fortunate and we should learn to surrender to them and to the lineage. And surrender is not submission. Surrendering takes courage, determination, and when we surrender we go beyond our personal world of egocentricity and we reach into a whole new dimension of ourselves which is spiritual, where we feel connected, where we do not feel cut-off, alienated, separated, as we normally do under the governance of ego.

Here I have described an idealised image of the teacher to some degree. To think the teacher has to be perfect and the teacher cannot show any kind of human weakness is unrealistic because teachers are human beings. Because teachers have certain weaknesses does not mean they can't be good teachers. The thing is, when we want somebody to be perfect, usually it's just a projection of our own mind and often that leads to disappointment. When you get to know the person then you find

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out that this person, after all, has to go to the toilet and has to pass wind - so they're not perfect after all. Sometimes, people can't believe it if the teacher falls sick - this person is supposed to be spiritually advanced. How come they are suffering from this or that ailment?

Even in terms of our normal, human relationships when we look for the perfect partner we can never find that person, but if we look for a person who is genuine, who is warm, caring, affectionate, we can find many potential partners like that. If we want a perfect human being as our life-partner we will never find them. In a similar way, we can find very, very good teachers but to find what we consider the perfect teacher is very difficult. As it is said in the teachings, even if we are lucky enough to meet the Buddha himself we

may not recognise that Buddha because of our own preconceived notions about what an enlightened being should be like. According to Buddhist teachings, during Buddha's lifetime Devadatta was always out there trying to kill him. The other thing is really, if a teacher is showing human qualities, humanness, then that teacher is fully engaged in our human affairs and then that teacher would be able to understand and relate to what we are experiencing, what we are going through as human beings.

The relationship with the teacher also has to go beyond just the physical presence. This is why in Tibetan Buddhism we do the prayers and practice called 'Calling the Lama From Afar'. In this practice you bring the presence of the teacher to your mind so that you actually can feel their presence so vividly and so intensely. It can be quite a real experience. In other words, the teacher never leaves you, even if the teacher is living somewhere far away still the teacher is with you. Even if the teacher has left his physical body still the teacher is with you.

His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche has passed away but one can still feel his presence even now. We should not be thinking, 'Now they are gone and now what are we going to do?', but we can still strongly feel their presence. They may have taken rebirth such as His Holiness the Karmapa, His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Kalu Rinpoche and so on. While we may have a natural devotion and faith in the rebirth of the great master we knew (and had a connection with) we can still invoke these teachers as we used to know them and feel their presence. We can also evoke the teacher through reading their teachings, and can develop a connection with a teacher through their written word, if we were not fortunate to actually spend time with them.

In other words, according to Tantricism, we can receive blessings from our teachers in many different ways and we can receive blessings even if our teacher is not physically present. If one wants to communicate to them while you are alone

of thing, so you are communicating and you can receive blessings by doing so. In other words, the image of the teacher in one's own mind and the feeling that one has generated in one's heart and one's total being is just as intense and real as if the

guru. But in terms of the absolute aspect of the guru then there is no gap separating our original state of being (our Buddha Nature) and the guru's original state of being and the adi-buddha, the primordial state of buddhahood.

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doing practice, studying or whatever, you're not going nuts if you want to say certain things, even if you want to complain or whatever, 'I'm not going anywhere', 'What's happening to me?', 'Help me'. If you read *doha* songs written by these great masters it's full of that kind

teacher is still in physical form. That is my experience, this is a very traditional approach.

As it's said, the true nature of our being, our state, is the ultimate guru, and the guru that we have, that we take teachings and empowerments from, is the relative

In this talk I was just basically explaining the whole teacher/student relationship generally. Personally, I have run the E-Vam Centre in a way that remains open to all kinds of people and we invite all different kinds of teachers from different traditions and different lineages. We invite traditional Asian teachers, Western Buddhist teachers academics and so on.

Rinpoche concludes the talk by saying, I like to think of E-Vam Institute as a learning institution where we put on all kinds of programs so that people can learn about Buddhism and learn about Buddhism in its many forms and also get to meet different teachers from the different tradiotns. ■



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The banner features a white silhouette of a Buddha figure on the left. Below the main text is a horizontal strip of seven small images: a seated Buddha statue, a pink lotus flower, a Buddha statue, a reclining Buddha statue, a seated Buddha statue, a Buddha head, and another pink lotus flower.

Interview with Traleg Rinpoche IX's Attendant, Nyima Gelek on the visit of His Eminence Goshri Gyaltshab Rinpoche XII to Sydney Australia in August 2025.



Nyima Gelek and His Eminence Goshri Gyaltshab Rinpoche XII

Traleg Khandro: I am delighted to be speaking to Nyima Gelek regarding his visit to Sydney recently to pay respects to His Eminence the 12th Goshri Gyaltshab Rinpoche on behalf of the E-Vam Centre during the Sydney Monlam, August 2025. Nyima la, Thank you for taking the time to represent E-Vam Institute in Sydney during this auspicious visit of His Eminence. Could you speak about the time that you spent with Gyaltshab Rinpoche.

Nyima Gelek: Thank you Felicity for giving me this opportunity to say a few

words about the visit and the opportunity I had to pay my respects. When I became aware that Gyaltshab Rinpoche was coming to Australia I was very excited as His Eminence is one of the main masters of the Kagyu lineage. He has a reputation of being wrathful and extremely learned. After speaking with the E-Vam Board it was decided I should pay my respects to His Eminence on behalf of Traleg Rinpoche, you and all the E-Vam members.

I was a little nervous, to be honest. I had to think about what I should say and so forth when meeting him. It had been planned

that I would meet him where he was staying in Sydney, but I received a phone call from his attendant, and was asked to meet His Eminence at the Opera House. The attendant waited for me in the lobby at the Opera House and took me to His Eminence who was sitting in the cafe. Despite the relaxed surroundings I managed to do my three prostrations, and pay my respect properly. The environment for our meeting was far more relaxed than I had expected.

I began by saying, Hello Rinpoche how are you. He said, "good". I then went on to say I am here to pay my respects to you on behalf of Traleg Rinpoche's Centre and Rinpoche's wife, and sangha. He thanked me for that. He asked me, how Traleg Rinpoche's centre's were going, and asked about the locations. I explained that Melbourne is around a 90 minute plane ride from Sydney, where we have a city centre in Carlton and a retreat centre outside the city in Healesville. I explained the Centre's are both going really well.

His Eminence asked after you, and said, "how is Traleg Rinpoche's wife going"? I explained that through Shogam Publications you have organised many of Traleg Rinpoche's teachings into books. His Eminence was very pleased and said that was really great, As a gift, I gave two Shogam books to His Eminence and he seemed very pleased with this gift.

He then asked after Yangsi Rinpoche (the 10th Traleg Rinpoche). I explained that he is very well, is an excellent student, and is enjoying his studies and focuses on them from the early morning through to the end of each day. He has memorized many of the traditional texts and rituals already. I explained that the main lama looking after Yangsi Rinpoche is Drupen la. There is a main tutor and other resident Lamas assisting Drupin La with Yangsi La's education and training. I explained that Drupen la was chosen by Thrangu Rinpoche. In summary, I explained to His Eminence that everything is going really well and smoothly.



I went on to explain that Drupin La is ensuring that distractions are kept to a minimum so Yangsi Rinpoche can continue to focus on his studies – education, and ritual practices – in the traditional way. I went on to say that, of course, when Yangsi Rinpoche grows up we have no idea what his ideas and approach will be. It will be totally up to him and we will remain open to what ever he plans. His activities may turn out to be similar or quite different to his predecessor. Perhaps he will have a different way of running things in this lifetime, so we will wait and see. At the moment we just wish to support him and remind him how important his studies and practices are. Also, to keep in mind how important it will be to continue the legacy of the previous Traleg Rinpoche, his activities in the east and west. All the members of the Traleg Rinpoche’s Centres pray for him to return to us as soon as possible to visit and to eventually resume his seat in Australia and to give teachings and guidance. We await his return every single day. His Eminence was very happy to hear all this.

I asked His Eminence’s attendant if His Eminence knew Traleg Rinpoche.

He explained that Traleg Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Goshri Rinpoche studied together. This was wonderful to know.

His Eminence wanted me to pass on his best wishes to you and the sangha. His Eminence said he may return to Australia in the future. I hope that it may be possible for him to visit our Centres. So we see what the future holds.

His Eminence invited me to spend more time through the afternoon with him, but my flight was booked, so I was unable to extend my time in Sydney. I was there to pay my respects on behalf of E-Vam and I was able to do that, so I was very happy and so fortunate to have met His Eminence.

His Eminence was very grateful as well. It turned out to be a wonderful way to pay my respect on behalf of the Centre and sangha in such a relaxed setting as the Opera House cafe. Gyaltsab Rinpoche also said how lucky we are that Traleg Rinpoche had returned so swiftly, and that we now have a wonderful opportunity to continue to serve him.

Khandro: Thank you so much for making the time and effort to represent E-Vam in this way to His Eminence. What a wonderful connection to have made.

Nyima: Yes, I was also paying my respects on behalf of Thrangu Monastery, in East Kham. I never thought that I would meet His Eminence Gyaltsab Goshri Rinpoche individually face to face. The meeting was blessed by the past and present Traleg Rinpoche’s. I never want to break my connection with Traleg Rinpoche in my thoughts and prayers. Opportunities to be blessed from Traleg Rinpoche’s past and present is the main thing. Paying respects to His Eminence really blessed the whole of the Traleg Rinpoche’s sangha’s, and his Centers as well.

Khandro: Thank you for sharing details of this auspicious meeting. I think the sangha will be so happy to hear the details of that visit and what a blessing it is for all of us.

Brief biography of His Eminence the 12th Goshro Gyaltshab Rinpoche

Gyaltsab Rinpoche is one of the four heart sons of the Karma Kagyu lineage. Historically, he has served as the regent of the Karmapa. The title “Gyaltsab” literally means “regent,” signifying the one who protects and upholds the teachings on behalf of the Karmapa. Gyaltsab Rinpoche is regarded as the emanation of the body, speech and mind of the successive Gyalwa Karmapas. Over the centuries, the Karmapas and Gyaltsab Rinpoches have appeared as teacher and student to one another, preserving an unbroken lineage that flows like a golden rosary.

Gyaltsab Rinpoche is also regarded as an emanation of the Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Da Shizhi) and Vajrapani, the Bodhisattva of tantric power. Moreover he is believed to be the reincarnation of numerous great masters, including Venerable Ananda—the personal attendant of Buddha Shakyamuni who memorized and recited all of the Buddha’s teachings; Lhontsang, the prime minister under King Songtsen Gampo who invited Princess Wencheng to Tibet; Kharchen Pelgyi Wangchuk—one of the twenty-five principle disciples of Guru Padmasambhava; Ngok Loden Sherab, the main disciple of the great Atisha; and Rechungpa, one of Milarepa’s main disciples. ■

News from E-Vam Institute



The 13th anniversary of the Parinirvana of the Very Venerable Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX

Over the Winter, E-Vam Institute provided the opportunity for people to come together to practice and study, drawing inspiration from some remarkable teachers. Alongside our weekly meditation, Vajrasattva practice, Urban Retreats, and monthly Chenrezig practice, we launched a new course series on *Buddhism and Meditation in Daily Life*, exploring essential foundations of Buddhist practice — offering both new and experienced practitioners the chance to deepen and grow their practice.

In May and June, the Meditation and Teachings Series continued with *Integral Buddhism*. Between walking and sitting meditation, participants listened to audio teachings by Traleg Rinpoche IX, exploring the importance of appreciating all the integrated aspects that make up our experience. From the integrated approach of the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path, the Abhidharma's psychology of thoughts and emotions, emptiness and interdependence, and Tibetan understandings of body, breath, and well-being.

“We must look at all aspects of our experience as being mutually interrelated.

Nothing arises in isolation. Nothing exists in isolation.”

— *Traleg Rinpoche IX,*
Integral Buddhism



Ekai Korematsu Roshi

In July, we were fortunate to once again host Ekai Korematsu Roshi, who taught on *Mountains Walking, Water Speaking* – Zen Master Dōgen's *Mountains and Waters Sutra* (*Sansuikyō*), one of the most revered chapters of the *Shōbōgenzō*. The course was generously attended, lively with Ekai Roshi's penetrating reflections and discussions.

On the symbolism of this text, Roshi explained: “The mountain is the still

aspect, and speaking that is the demonstrating – mountains demonstrating ‘walking’. When you practice sitting meditation, zazen. You are demonstrating that mountain.”

On letting go of a dualistic perspective: “Zen Master Dogen is presenting a kind of clever way to point the exact way we have a tendency to think we can advance from the lower place to the higher place – ultimately, that ‘this’ is the highest teaching, that you can achieve something... but that kind of notion is totally off. You need to let go... It's not about high or low. It's about qualities you can produce. It can be very simple practice, but ‘quality’ is there. You don't need to talk about emptiness, shunyata. You can say, ‘I love you’ — the ‘quality’ is there. That is the most important thing.”

In August, we were fortunate to host Do Tulku Rinpoche, who returned online to continue teaching on *The Way of the Bodhisattva*. Rinpoche's teachings explored the crucial importance of vigilant introspection in Chapter 5.

As Rinpoche explained: “Vigilance is being aware, being very aware. I guess



Do Tulku Rinpoche

Vigilance may be one step after awareness – it is doing something about it, after being aware. If it is something that we are not supposed to do – it is to bring correction.” “Being vigilant is very much similar to that when you meet the Dharma and feel it is right, it is correct, finally you are doing something proper... It is like finally finding some shade, escaping the blistering flame of this world. That is awareness — there is vigilance there... You knew it was the correct thing to do, you knew what was happening and you followed it. Vigilant Introspection is just this — nothing else... looking inside.”

In September, Khenpo Chönyi Rangdrol taught online on Being Fully in the World, exploring the Three Trainings that encapsulate the entirety of Buddhism – Śīla, Samadhi, and Prajñā, (moral ethics,

meditation, and wisdom). Khenpo emphasized that these are not abstract categories or merely rules, but living practices that guide us in every moment.

“If you practice Śīla, then you are making a base foundation for your meditation to give rise. And then within that meditation, the wisdom arises. And with that wisdom, again, it will guide us to our joyful life, our meaningful life.”

Khenpo-la explained the profound logic and benefits of these practices, and showed how their meaning extends



Khenpo Chönyi Rangdrol

beyond their traditional formulation, creating modern opportunities to integrate the trainings into daily life. For example, Khenpo suggested practices such

as “micro samādhi” – short meditations focusing on normal activities during our day – as well as the notion of Digital Śīla: cultivating mindfulness of what we consume online and how we ethically interact in the digital space.

This period also marked the 13th anniversary of the Parinirvana of the Very Venerable Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX, with the community gathering together in remembrance of our precious teacher, both in-person and online. We listened to Rinpoche’s audio teachings on *The Relationship with Others and a Meaningful Life*, practiced Rinpoche’s Guru Yoga, and concluded with a beautiful Tsog feast and with warmth and connection between sangha.

The winter period stands as a testament to the profound continued activity of Traleg Rinpoche IX through the wonderful centre that Rinpoche established. Through Rinpoche’s continued activity, we have the space to hear the Dharma and therefore the opportunity to integrate Dharma into our lives for everyone’s benefit.

It is with heartfelt gratitude that we thank all these luminous teachers who taught this Winter. We also thank the staff and participants whose dedication and presence made this period so meaningful. ■

Mark Dawson



For Group Venue Hire and/or Solo Retreats contact Maitripa Centre at info@maitripacentre.org

News from Nyima Tashi Buddhist Centre Auckland, New Zealand

In honour of the 9th Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche - Building the Temple project one brick at a time

Nyima Tashi is delighted to announce the purchase of a property in the heart of Point Chevalier (an inner suburb of Auckland), with a landmass that lends itself towards developing a retreat environment.

The purchase of this property is the first phase in realising Traleg Rinpoche's vision of offering authentic retreat in an urban setting. To bring this vision to fruition, the purchased property will need to be renovated and upgraded in several phases.

In order to best relate with the epic demands facing humanity, it is incumbent upon all of us to at least try to awaken a state of mind that has the capacity to restore one's original state of purity and integrity through the development of contemplation, practice and study - allowing us to develop a better approach for caring for ourselves, others and the world at large.

Once completed the Retreat Centre will accommodate up to thirty retreatants, it will house a commercial Kitchen - Dining area, bookshop, Library & Meditation Hall along with a residence for visiting Teachers.

We hope the Centre will provide a platform for furthering one's knowledge in terms of Yoga, Ritual practices, Shedra studies along with the Arts and Sciences. These courses will be supported and led by the Centre's resident Khenpo.

The first phase of work has already commenced to bring the property to the point where it can begin to welcome students to weekly classes. In its present state, the property requires an internal fit out for the intended purpose. This will be followed by the construction of the Retreat facility.

If you wish to financially support this project, Nyima Tashi welcomes donations which can be made through the website www.nyima-tashi.org.nz - Support Us.

May all our aspirations, prayers, good deeds and steadfast commitment to Rinpoche's vision bring this project to fruition for the benefit of all ■

Meaghan Duffy



News from E-Vam Buddhist Institute U.S.



The Summer Fall online program this year included a course entitled 'Distinguishing Samsara from Nirvana'. I had the opportunity to give commentary on a series of Traleg Rinpoche's teachings, that helped us to gain insight into where to rest the mind and how to investigate the mind in meditation in order to reduce our samsaric fog. As we studied together we found the teachings served as a tremendous guide, elucidating the path for the practitioner.

Currently Anthony Bruno (Tenzin Chodak) is guiding us through a course



Tenzin Chodak

on 'Bodhisattva Maitreya and His Treatise on Buddha Nature', exploring the historical background about Bodhisattva Maitreya from the sutras of the Buddha's third turning of the wheel of Dharma. Anthony is also presenting select verses along with classical and contemporary explanations to assist the practitioner in a most practical way. It is the first time Anthony has given a course at E-Vam, and we look forward to more insightful courses with Anthony in the future.

Julie Brefczynski-Lewis continues to lead her wonderful Buddhist Study Group and Elisha Rush leads the Under 35's Group, whose activities are developing beautifully. Both groups are run in West Virginia. For further information on both groups please email E-Vam office@evam.org and we will put you in contact with the group leaders.

COMING UP AT E-VAM USA

Beginning 4 November 2025 LoJong – Cultivating Compassion through Training the Mind, an online course with Lama Jinpa

We will again welcome Lama Jinpa to continue his wonderful, practical and insightful teachings and commentary on the LoJong Slogans. Drawing on his own



Lama Jinpa

experience, and providing commentary on aspects of the book *LoJong: Cultivating Compassion through Mind Training*, by Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche, Shambhala Publications, Lama Jinpa will help bring these traditional practices to life.

Lama Jinpa is a longtime student of Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche's. He completed the traditional Karma Kagyu three year retreat at Karma Ling Retreat Centre in Delhi, New York under Rinpoche's guidance. Lama Jinpa is a householder practitioner and a regular presenter for E-Vam. To attend and for more details please email office@evam.org

2026 Online Courses and the May In-Person Retreat.

Beginning 20 January 2026, Dr. Julie Brefczynski-Lewis will be giving a 4 week online course 'The Neuroscience of Meditation Practices.'



Dr. Julie Brefczynski-Lewis

In this course, we will dive into how the brain's attention, emotion, and motivational systems work, such that Buddhist and secular practitioners alike may better appreciate mindfulness practices and teachings. Being careful not to materialize, we will examine the pros and cons of secular mindfulness approaches in reducing human suffering, view scientific studies on meditation with a Buddhist lens, and debate how the omission of certain traditional elements influenced current issues in the field. This is not just a passive course on secular mindfulness-based interventions, as we will experiment with and discuss novel ways of integrating more traditional roots into these practices.

Dr. Julie Brefczynski-Lewis is a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Neuroscience at West

Virginia University. She received her PhD in Cell Biology, Neurobiology, and Anatomy from the Medical College of Wisconsin. Brefczynski-Lewis has been practicing and researching meditation practices for more than 20 years. Currently, the Brefczynski-Lewis lab is testing the effectiveness of compassion meditation to help deal with the stress and negative emotions related to difficult interpersonal relationships, and has helped developed novel neuroimaging methods that allow more natural behavioural testing.

March-April 2026 Essential Mahamudra Teachings (dates to be confirmed)

Using traditional instructions, the subtleties and nuances of the Mahamudra approach to meditation will be discussed in this course. Drawing on Traleg Rinpoche's teachings mainly from his books Moonbeams of Mahamudra and King Doha, this practical course will look at the Mahamudra approach to free the mind from negative tendencies and fixations by resting in these very states of mind without judgement in order to uncover our Buddha Nature. The course is suitable for beginners and the more experienced, and will provide an excellent preparation for anyone planning to attend the May 2026 Mahamudra Retreat in Crestone, CO. Further details regarding this course will be available soon.

E-Vam's Annual In-Person "Path of Mahamudra" Retreat, 24-30 May 2026 in Crestone Colorado.

Bookings are now open for the May 2026 annual Mahamudra Retreat to be held at the beautiful Vajra Vidya Retreat Centre, situated close to the E-Vam land



Khenpo Lobzang Tenzin

in Crestone CO. The highly regarded, warm and insightful Venerable Khenpo Lobzang Tenzin will lead all aspects of the Retreat and will teach on the remarkable Mahamudra "Vivid Awareness" teachings. The accommodation is very comfortable, and single and shared room options are available. During the retreat we hope to visit to bless the E-Vam land, and to visit the famous Tashi Gomang Stupa. Please email office@evam.org to receive the Retreat Information Sheet, and to book.

Online Course donations and General Donations online options:

PayPal online donation: via the E-Vam website: <https://evam.org/donate> or directly through PayPal: payments@evam.org. Online courses are normally by donation.

For bookings and enquiries: for all courses online and in-person please email office@evam.org to receive zoom details and other course details. ■

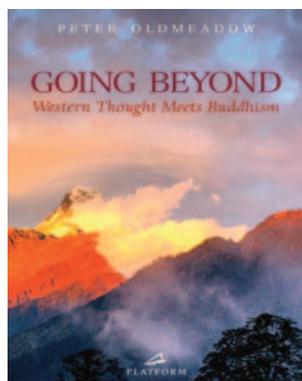
Traleg Khandro



News from Akshara Bookstore

Going Beyond Western Thought Meets Buddhism Peter Oldmeadow

Platform Publications (soon to be released)



In a world where assumptions shape every aspect of our understanding, how often do we pause to examine the hidden beliefs that influence our view of the world—especially when it comes to something as profound as Buddhism? This insightful book invites readers to explore what they bring to their encounter with Buddhism and to reflect on how their own cultural

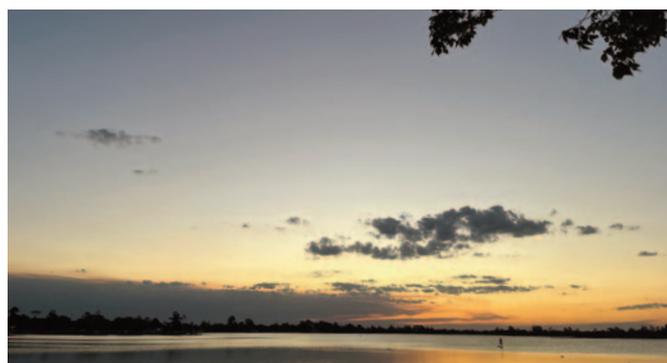
and intellectual backgrounds affect their understanding.

By drawing on Western thought and the history of ideas, and exploring the thinking of philosophers whose thought resonates with Buddhism and who have challenged modern assumptions, this book offers a way to gain deeper awareness, showing how reflection can lead not only to a clearer understanding of Buddhism, but also a greater understanding of ourselves, society, and reality. This is more than a guide to unearthing hidden cultural assumptions—it's an opportunity for self-discovery.

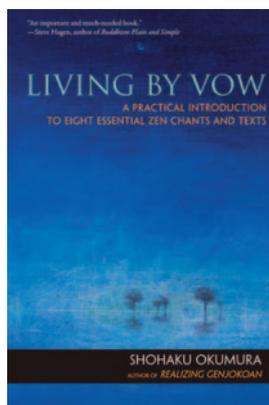
Perfect for seekers, scholars, and anyone eager for deeper understanding, this book encourages individuals of all backgrounds to challenge the unseen assumptions that shape their spiritual and intellectual journeys.

"Heretofore, most studies of the transmission of Buddhism to the West have focused on Asian missionaries and exiles as the agents. In this brilliant study, Peter Oldmeadow shows us just how important the receptivity of major European philosophers was in this process, and how much of this transmission is due to their agency in seeking and interpreting Buddhist teachings and integrating them into Western thought. He shows deftly how ideas from each tradition came to inform the other, and how much we owe to these Western philosophers of the 19th and 20th centuries."

—Jay L. Garfield, Doris Silbert Professor in the Humanities and Professor of Philosophy and Buddhist Studies at Smith College, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, University of Melbourne.



Living by Vow: A Practical Guide to Zen Liturgy Shohaku Okumura Wisdom Publications



This immensely useful book explores Zen's rich tradition of chanted liturgy and the powerful ways that such chants support meditation, expressing and helping us truly uphold our heartfelt vows to live a life of freedom and compassion.

Exploring eight of Zen's most essential and universal liturgical texts, *Living by Vow* is a handbook to walking the Zen path. Shohaku Okumura guides us like an old

friend, speaking clearly and directly of the personal meaning and implications of these chants, generously using his experiences to illustrate their practical significance.

A scholar of Buddhist literature, he masterfully uncovers the subtle, intricate web of culture and history that permeate these great texts. Esoteric or challenging terms take on vivid, personal meaning, and old familiar phrases gain new poetic resonance.

"This is a great book: a rare text that fully integrates the richness of Dogen's culturally profound Buddhism with the needs of the contemporary student. Its discussion of Soto Zen's key liturgical texts will be required reading for all students of that tradition—and will be of great benefit to anyone who wants to appreciate the nature and scope of religious life. I am inspired and delighted by this book and will be using it for a long time to come."

—Zoketsu Norman Fischer, author of *Training in Compassion*

Excellent Secondhand Books

Akshara Bookstore continues to receive generous donations of Buddhist books covering a wide range of topics. Featured here is a fresh selection of excellent secondhand titles now available in-store.

The Heart Treasure of the Enlightened Ones by Dilgo Khyentse

The Places That Scare You by Pema Chödrön

The Nectar of Manjushri's Speech by Khenpo Ngawang Pelzang

The Essence of the Heart Sutra by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

The 37 Practices of a Bodhisattva by Geshe Sonam Rinchen

Kum Nye: Tibetan Yoga by Tarthang Tulku

Living Without Regret by Arnold Maitland

The Torch of Certainty by Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche

The Five Houses of Zen by Thomas Cleary

A Guide to the Words of My Perfect Teacher by Khenpo Ngawang Pelzang

Ornament of Stainless Light by Khedrup Norsang Gyatso

Ornament of Clear Realization by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche ■

E-Vam Institute Spring Teaching Program 2025



4-DAY NOVEMBER RETREAT

Maitripa Contemplative Centre & Online

Evening of Friday 7 November to Tuesday 11 November

Going on retreat has been part of Buddhism since the Buddha's time. In the Kagyu tradition, known as the practice lineage, retreat is cherished as a time to be in a spiritually focused and supportive environment for an extended period of time. Whether new to Buddhism or an experienced practitioner, retreat is an essential component of the Spiritual Path. Upholding the retreat schedule provided by Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX, the retreat includes structured time for meditation practice, teachings, yoga, and incorporates daily Green Tara and Chenrezig pujas.

DAY OF MEDITATION AND TEACHINGS SERIES

Cultivating Balance, Clarity, and Joy in Practice – The Seven Factors That Lead to Enlightenment
Sundays 26 October, 23 November & 14 December 9.00am – 5.00pm

When it comes to understanding the Buddhist path, Enlightenment can often seem a vague idea or a far-away state of being. However, in this series of talks, Rinpoche shows us how understanding enlightenment is integral to understanding practice. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment: mindfulness, the wisdom of discrimination, vigour, joy, pliancy of body and mind, mental concentration and equanimity, are indispensable on the path.

BUDDHISM AND MEDITATION IN DAILY LIFE
Saturday 18 October 10.00am – 12.30pm

What is Buddhism? Why do we meditate? What is the relationship between Buddhist practice and philosophy? What does it mean to be a Buddhist? How do I integrate Buddhism into my daily life?

In this Introductory series, we shall consider the essentials of the Buddhist Path. Through deepening our understanding of key Buddhist concepts and practices, we can then apply Buddhism to our lives and enrich ourselves. Led by Dechen Davies, long-term student of Traleg Rinpoche, these half-day courses offer practical guidance, relevant not only for those new to Buddhism but also provide an opportunity for anyone to refresh their practice.

WEEKLY MEDITATION

Wednesdays, 6.00pm – 6.45pm (see website for schedule)

The weekly sessions offer the opportunity to begin or renew your meditation 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 practicing with others.



CHENREZIG PUJA

First Friday of every month

7.30-8.30pm

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. Join us for this wonderful practice.

UNDER 35s PROGRAM

UNDER 35s URBAN RETREAT

Every last Saturday of the Month, 9.30am - 4.30pm

Offering a warm and inviting environment, E-Vam Institute welcomes people under 35 with the unique opportunity to join us to learn from key meditation practices and delve deeply into important concepts of Buddhist philosophy. The Urban Retreat encourages an integrated approach to spirituality through practicing what are known as The Three Trainings of Buddhist Practice: Meditation, Wisdom, and Moral Sensitivity.



MONTHLY VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE FOR UNDER 35s:
First Sunday of Every Month
10am-1pm

For those curious about practice within the Tibetan Buddhist system, we offer a monthly practice of Vajrasattva entitled *A Chariot of Great Merit*, a Vajrasattva Sadhana of the Dudjom Tersar Tradition revealed by the

Terton Garwang Drodruk Lingpa Tsal. These sessions are suitable for beginners.

!! SAVE THE DATES !!

2026 Buddhist Summer School 10 – 13 January

A rich tapestry of traditions has been woven by Asian cultures around the essence of the teachings of the Buddha, who lived more than 2,500 years ago. The enduring nature of Buddhism is symptomatic of its integrity as a spiritual discipline that speaks to contemporary experience, especially in a world of increasing challenge and uncertainty. Over the 42 years since its founding, the annual Buddhist Summer School has become one of the foremost gatherings in Australia for Buddhists from various traditions to discuss and explore topics related to philosophy, practice, and engagement with Western disciplines such as psychology. Bringing both insight and practical advice from each tradition, the Buddhist Summer School offers a genuinely ecumenical forum for exchange and learning. Come and enjoy the beautiful environment of Maitripa Contemplative Centre or participate in the Buddhist Summer School from your home. Either way, the Summer School offers a diverse and rich program for both experienced practitioners and those new to Buddhism. ■

