



“If we develop mindfulness of body, we can detect our reactions before they become full-blown explosions.”

—ACHARYA ALLYN LYON
KSMC • May 2005

About Us

Established in 1976, the Kootenay Shambhala Meditation Centre is part of an international community of some 170 meditation centres and groups founded by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and now led by his son and spiritual heir, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. At the heart of the community are the Shambhala Buddhist teachings, a unique expression of the wisdom of the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages of Tibetan Buddhism and the Shambhala tradition of living an uplifted life, fully engaged with the world.

Our core offerings include free mindfulness-awareness meditation instruction, a curriculum of Shambhala Buddhist teachings, and training in contemplative arts. The thread that runs through all we do is the aspiration to relieve suffering by awakening the world to its own potential.

We invite everyone to participate in this journey of discovery.

Regular Public Events

These events are open to anyone, free of charge or by donation. For the latest information about any of our programs or events, check our online calendar. For further help email info@nelsonbuddha.com.

Open House

Mondays, 7-9:30pm

Our Open House program introduces participants to Shambhala Buddhist practice, teachings and culture.

• **7pm:** Meditation practice (introductory meditation instruction is available at 7pm, further instruction at 7:30pm) • **8pm:** Talk, discussion or video • **9pm:** Tea

Meditation Practice

Thursdays, 5:15-6:15pm, and Sundays, 9am-noon

These sessions emphasize the Shambhala community's central practice—mindfulness-awareness meditation—in both sitting and walking forms. Sessions start and end with chants. Participants are welcome to come and go as they please.

Café Shambhala

First Sunday of the month, 9am-noon

A variation of the usual Sunday session format, Café Shambhala includes group meditation instruction at 9am, a couple of short talks, and a break for refreshments, relaxed discussion and getting acquainted.

Children in Shambhala

First Sunday of the month, 9am-noon

With storytelling, games and refreshments, this program offers a fun introduction to the Shambhala world. It is meant for children whose parents are developing their own meditation practice.

Sadhana of Mahamudra

New and full moon days, 7-8pm

The Sadhana of Mahamudra, a text written by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, embodies a way of cutting through all forms of dogmatism. The practice involves chanting the text and relaxing into the atmosphere that doing so creates.

Dharma for Dinner: A New Format for Weeknight Courses

This Fall we're trying a new way of running Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies (SSBS) weeknight courses. We're holding a class every Thursday evening through mid-December, offering courses back to back. And we're structuring the classes in a way we hope makes them both beneficial and fun.

At 6:15pm each Thursday, after the regular meditation practice session, we're re-arranging the main shrine room and then sharing a silent, contemplative dinner there. (We're trying to keep the food cost in line with that of eating at home. Dinners can be as simple as

ordering pizza, or soup, salad and buns supplied by participants.) After dinner, the evening's class takes place, starting with a discussion of homework questions based on the week's assigned readings.

The classes, though open to anyone, ask more of participants than our Open House program does: teachings are more in-depth, and students are expected to complete each course they start, do the readings and contemplate the homework questions.

We hope this format will enable interested students to complete the nine courses in the SSBS curriculum in a timely and enjoyable way.

Another thing we're trying this Fall is using the Internet to reach people who can't attend classes at the Centre. Audio files, handouts and a text-based discussion forum related to each of the SSBS courses outlined immediately below are being made available to course registrants on a password-secured page on the Centre's website. The suggested donation for each course is the same, whether one participates at the Centre, on the Internet, or in some combination of these two options.

Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies

"Taming the Mind"

With Russell Rodgers

Thursdays, September 28 - October 26, 6:30-8pm

Suggested donation: \$50 (meals and sourcebook not included)

This course covers the foundations of the Buddhist path. Students will need to purchase or borrow the sourcebook *Taming the Mind and Walking the Bodhisattva Path*, based on a seminar Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche gave in 1999. The book is available through Jim Northcote at info@nelsonbuddha.com for about \$35 (allowing three weeks for delivery is recommended).

Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies

"Walking the Bodhisattva Path"

With Tim Albert

Thursdays, November 9 - December 14, 6:30-8pm

Suggested donation: \$60 (meals and sourcebook not included)

In the readings for this course, also from the sourcebook described above, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche presents the mahayana (greater vehicle) path of dedicating one's life and practice to rousing awakened heart and engaging the practices of a bodhisattva warrior for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Other Special Programs & Events

Vajrayana Practice and Studies "Creation and Completion"

With Russell Rodgers

Saturdays, starting September 30, 1-4pm

"Creation and Completion" is a text by Jamgön Kongtrül the Great. This text was the basis for two seminars that Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso gave to vajrayana students in Boulder in 1995 and 1996. In these seminars Khenpo surveys the vajrayana path and discusses how its visualization practices actually work, and how mahamudra, maha ati, and the six dharmas of Naropa all fit together. This course, open to all tantrikas, explores these teachings.

Each session comprises two hours of vajrayana practice—done in silence (except for bells and dorjes), unless a group feast is taking place—followed by a class facilitated by Russell Rodgers.

The Future of Shambhala

An Evening with Richard Reoch, President of Shambhala

Tuesday, October 3, 6-10pm

Richard Reoch, the President of Shambhala, is visiting the Kootenay Shambhala Centre as part of his Fall tour of every Shambhala Centre in North America. The purpose of his visit is to bring together the entire local Shambhala community—members, friends and their families—to engage in dialogue about the future of Shambhala and to celebrate with good food and conversation.

The evening's schedule: **5pm:** Centre leadership meets with the President • **6pm:** Dorje Kasung Mess (pre-dinner social), open to the community • **6:30pm:** Community potluck dinner with the President • **7:30pm:** Community practice, President's remarks and open discussion • **9:30pm:** Reception, an opportunity for people to speak personally to the President.

RICHARD REOCH was appointed President of Shambhala by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche in 2002. Born into a Buddhist family in Canada, he has devoted his working life to defending human rights, protecting the environment and promoting peace. Formerly the global media chief of Amnesty International, Richard is a trustee of the Rainforest Foundation, and he heads the International Working Group on Sri Lanka, an organization dedicated to ending the Buddhist world's longest running war.

Shambhala Training Level I: The Art of Being Human

With Acharya Allyn Lyon

Friday, October 20, 7-9:30pm, and Saturday, October 21, 8:30-6pm

Suggested donation: \$110

As human beings, we long for sanity, compassion and inspiration in our lives. According to the Shambhala teachings as presented by Chögyam Trungpa, this longing is a manifestation of basic goodness—the dignity and wakefulness that we all possess. Level I of Shambhala Training introduces the practice of meditation as a way to uncover and contact this innate dignity and wakefulness.

This introductory program, open to anyone, includes meditation instruction and practice, group discussion, private interviews and talks on the Shambhala teachings. To register or for more information email Sally Albert or Gala Sly at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies “The Four Foundations of Mindfulness”

With Acharya Allyn Lyon

Friday, October 27 (evening) - Sunday, October 29

Suggested donation: \$150

The four foundations of mindfulness—mindfulness of body, feeling, mind and mental events—represent one of the most widely practiced teachings on Buddhist meditation. This weekend program, suitable for practitioners of any level of experience, demonstrates the degree of precision that can be applied to meditation practice and the degree of insight that can arise at the same time. To register or for more information email Candace Batycki at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

Refuge Vow Ceremony

With Acharya Allyn Lyon

Saturday, October 28 (evening)

Taking the refuge vow might be described as committing oneself to relaxing evermore fully into the present moment. It marks the point at which one formally becomes a Buddhist. Anyone interested in making this commitment is encouraged to take the “Taming the Mind” course described above and to ask a meditation instructor about further recommended preparation. To register for the ceremony or for more information, email Peter Maloff at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

Elsewhere in Shambhala

Pacific Northwest Winter Dathün

With Acharya Eve Rosenthal and Ben Hines

Shawnigan Lake, BC • December 9 - January 6

\$1,045 (or \$345 per week); discounts are available

This *dathün* (“month session”) is a month-long meditation retreat open to anyone. For details see www.nelsonbuddha.com/dathun.

Other Programs & Events

The Kootenay Shambhala Centre continually receives information about programs and events taking place in the wider Shambhala world (as well as other helpful resource materials). To keep abreast of this information, see the blue “Further Resources” binder in the community room at the Centre.

Column

It’s All In Your Mind

By Russell Rodgers

RUSSELL RODGERS is a senior member of the KSMC. He has been practicing and studying Shambhala Buddhism for about 30 years.

Many people look to Buddhism for peaceful meditation, but are often put off by what they see as extraneous cultural baggage from its countries of origin. The bewildered novice meditator, trying to figure out whether this path is trustworthy or not, suddenly has to cope with chants that refer to protector deities, pure lands, reincarnation into many realms of visible and invisible existence, miraculous deeds by enlightened people, *tülkus*, and much more. It seems plain old weird. Is there a way to bridge this gulf between cultures? I initially intended this series of essays to be an explanation of the chants, but rather than plunging straight into definitions of Buddhist terminology, I think it’s worthwhile to lay some general background.

One of the problems we encounter in the chants is that the cultural lens through which we view our world is very different than that of most cultures. The Greeks, Romans, Celts, Japanese, Chinese, Hindu and indigenous shamanic traditions all have a more fluid and magical view of the “material” world than we do. Our perspective of reality has been heavily influenced by the monotheistic religions originating in the holy lands of the Middle East. The Judeo-Christian and Islamic religions tend to see physical reality as separate from and lesser than their godhead. Most likely, only a

relative handful of Christian, Jewish or Islamic mystics would think that in looking at nature they are actually seeing the body of God.

Most religious people in our culture think that material reality was created by a God who has a separate, spiritual, identity and that physical reality operates at a lower level, mechanically, like a giant clock. (God does, however, reserve the option to give nature the occasional nudge.) Scientists have accepted this basic assumption about matter and have tried to interpret material reality on a purely mechanistic basis. They have been so successful that in some sense they have displaced the purely religious priesthood in our esteem. However, the materialistic view leaves an aching void, because it doesn't address what really matters to people: love, esthetic expression, and a holistic sense of place and connection with a living and magical universe.

Buddhist cultures, on the other hand, originated from a polytheistic environment, where the gods embodied elemental forces—the natural elements of earth, wind, fire, water, space and living creatures. One could connect deeply to, and influence, the elements through appropriate ritual and understanding of their divine and essentially magical nature. This kind of thinking makes the scientifically inclined very uncomfortable.

Buddhist cultures have historically placed less emphasis than the monotheistic ones on rejecting the polytheistic religious cultures that gave birth to them. They have tended to incorporate the magic, fluidity and earthiness of polytheism, but understand it from a more profound point of view that is more rigorously experiential and non-theistic. The Cittamatra school of mahayana Buddhism is one such tradition. If one understands the Cittamatra, then one can understand and accept some of the seemingly outlandish world-views that one encounters, for instance, in the chants.

Cittamatrans say that all our experiences of the world occur in the mind. Trees and rocks don't grow in our heads, but mental perceptions of trees and rocks do. So trees are mind, even though we mentally designate them as "outer." The apparent material solidity of trees and rocks is also a quality of mind, as is illustrated by the fact that trees and rocks are apparently solid in a dream. The dream example shows that we are quite capable having "solid" thoughts. Cittamatrans say that whatever the attributes of matter we experience, since they exist in our perception, they are thus attributes of our minds.

The dream example is very important to understanding the Cittamatran view. They say that dreams differ from waking projections only in relative terms, by degree, but not by a fundamental difference in substance. We

distinguish dreams from waking consciousness by degree of vividness, logical coherence, and how they fit in with the consensus of others' waking experience. However, we sometimes have very vivid, logically coherent dreams where all the dream people apparently experience the same thing. From within the dream, we can't tell the difference between waking consciousness and dreaming. In the dream and in waking life, there is an apparent perceiver and perceived. Both poles of this duality are obviously mind in the dream example. Why not so in waking life? Great meditators say, from their experience, that there is a bigger mind that contains subject, object and everything else that we think we know.

Scientists have a material explanation for perception, involving sensory perception of a truly existent exterior world, electrons, nerves, brains and so on. However their experiments registered as perceptions in their minds, and their scientific explanations travel from the mind of one scientist to that of another. There follows from their experiments (as perceived in their minds) a resulting logic, based on a beautiful consistency of repeatability, that says that there must be something real and stable out there. However, what is out there could just be a consistent, logical aspect of the observing mind. The idea of perceived outer objects and a subjective inner perceiver, for instance, is consistently present in our experience, and fits with consensus of our peers, but the dream example shows that the both are mind only. This is something that one can investigate for oneself in waking life, if one's shamatha meditation is stable enough.

Furthermore, if our brains are just electrical circuits, then are we really saying that matter can think? If so, what do we mean by matter? In short, our reality is our minds and we don't really know if anything is out there, except through a consensus of conventional thinking. We all know about the shakiness of unexamined consensus. Interestingly, atomic and quantum physics also suggests that matter, if it exists, isn't what we normally think it is. On a quantum level, it seems to come in and out of existence, consist mostly of empty space, change when observed, distort time, and transform from particles into energy and back again. Theoretical physicists talk openly about dimensions we aren't conscious of, and multiple universes. Buddhists just leave the question of a truly existent separate material reality as a question mark. Cittamatrans say that the first thing to look at, the thing that we have ignored all along, is the mind that contains these appearances.

The mind that the Cittamatrans are talking about is not what we think of as our personal, thinking, confused mind. They are talking about a mind that is vast and contains all the reality that we experience and, in fact,

contains the potential for many realities. If one realizes the nature of this mind, in the moment, actually and not just intellectually, then habitual ways of conceptualizing and freezing reality dissolve. What is left is empty, luminous, powerful, fluid and magical. Although it's all mind, nevertheless there are patterns of action and result, and karma is important. Viewed from this point of view, the "cultural trappings" of Tibetan Buddhism are not particularly bizarre. They just illustrate certain points about the possibilities of the mind. They are possible ways that mind can seemingly embody itself. We could look into them and try to see what wisdom they contain, and why they were left in the Buddhist world view as illustrative examples of something, rather than excluded as primitive superstition.

The Cittamatras were great meditators, because their view raised many questions that individual meditators can test against their experience. All you have to do is practice shamatha until your mind is clear and stable, and then look directly, moment by moment, at your experience to see if it agrees. This kind of looking is called vipashyana. It is a tall order, but achievable with diligence in shamatha and curiosity about one's experience.

For a more complete discussion of the Cittamatra view, see *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*, by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso.

Community

The Shambhala Centre is home to a community of people who share a connection to mindfulness-awareness practice and the aspiration to realize a more wakeful, saner society. There are many ways to get involved—attending programs and celebrations, working with a meditation instructor, joining in recreational activities and helping out at the Centre, for instance. Everyone's participation is invited and appreciated.

A new way of joining in the life of our community is by coming to Drala Committee parties at the Centre on Sunday afternoons. The Drala Committee is a souped up version of our old Housekeeping Committee. It's meant to meet the challenge of keeping the Centre at its sparkling best while avoiding volunteer burnout. The parties are a chance for members and friends to mix work, play and community. See our online calendar for details.

Staying in the loop about what's on at the Shambhala Centre is easy. In addition to our online calendar we have two email lists: a monthly newsletter-only list and a list intended mainly for members and active friends. Those on the latter receive both the newsletter and emails related to everyday stuff like reminders about upcoming talks, meetings and parties. To subscribe to either list email Jim Northcote at info@nelsonbuddha.com.