



Kootenay
Shambhala
Meditation
Centre

NEWSLETTER • May 2007

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"Send a fool to close the shutters and
he'll close them all over town."

—YIDDISH PROVERB

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 and a curriculum of Shambhala, Buddhist and contemplative arts training. 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 see our events calendar at www.nelsonbuddha.com or email us at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

Meditation Practice

Sundays, 9am-noon

Thursdays, 5:15-6:15pm

These sessions highlight 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 choose.

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 available at 7pm, further instruction at 7:30pm) • **8pm:** Talk and discussion • **9pm:** Tea

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.

Meditation Tune-Up

First Sunday of each month, 9am-noon

Meditation instruction (at 9am), practice, a couple of short talks and a light mid-morning community breakfast combine to create a sociable way for participants to perk up their meditation.

Children in Shambhala

Cancelled for May

Aimed at children ages 5 to 11, this program offers a fun introduction to Shambhala, with yoga, mindfulness-awareness-related activities, storytelling and refreshments.

SPECIAL PROGRAM

Riding the Energy of Emotions

A One-Week Exploration of the Path of Wakefulness

With Acharya Dale Asrael

Saturday, July 7 - Sunday, July 15

At Senge Ling, our retreat land near Nelson

Open to anyone • Suggested donation: \$450

Important message from program coordinator Laurel Williams:

We're looking forward to a fabulous retreat with Acharya Dale Asrael!! There are now several names on the program registration waiting list. At the same time, only ten people have actually reserved their spaces in the program by sending

in their registration forms and deposits. If you want to reserve your space, please send in your registration form and deposit by Sunday, May 6th. If we haven't received these from you by that date, we will make your space available to someone on the waiting list. Thank you!

The Kootenay Shambhala Meditation Centre warmly invites you to our annual weeklong retreat at Senge Ling, our retreat land near Nelson.

We will spend a week exploring the ways that anger, jealousy and other emotions can either trap us in struggle or open us to the direct experience of awakening. Even the most painful emotions can be the basis for developing compassion for ourselves and others, providing us glimpses of the pure energy that is the essence of emotion. We will work with techniques that expose the core belief structures that perpetuate emotional confusion, and meditation practices that lead to the development of insight.

Acharya (senior teacher) Dale Asrael, a student of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche for 34 years and a professor at Naropa University, will direct the program. The retreat will include meditation instruction, eight to ten hours of daily meditation practice, talks, oryoki meals (a monastic eating style), and camp chores. Both seasoned and novice meditators are welcome.

Senge Ling is rustic. Accommodation is in personal tents, and there is no electricity. The shrine hall is a screened pavilion open on all sides to the forest.

All our programs are run on a donation basis. The suggested donation for this program is \$450; feel free to offer more or less according to your situation. Space is limited to 25 people. Please register with Laurel Williams at retreat.registration@shaw.ca or (250) 354-7924. A \$100 deposit is requested, refundable before June 1st. Preference will be given to people who plan to attend the whole program.

ACHARYA DALE ASRAEL has been leading meditation retreats internationally for more than 25 years. A professor in Transpersonal Counseling Psychology, Buddhist Studies and Contemplative Education at Naropa University, she also trains meditation instructors who wish to serve in hospices, prisons and homeless shelters.

CORE PATH PROGRAMS

Shambhala's core training path offers ways of exploring Shambhala Buddhism beyond what is possible at our Open Houses or in other introductory programs. The curriculum consists of three main elements:

- **Shambhala Training**, a secular meditative path of realizing the world's natural goodness
- **Buddhist studies**, a progressive exploration of Tibetan Buddhist teachings and meditation
- **Training in contemplative arts**, bringing a meditative perspective to various art forms

We invite people to engage this path to the degree they want. Curriculum programs altogether offer students the preparation they require to receive subtler training.

SHAMBHALA TRAINING • Outrageous/ Inscrutable

With Dan Peterson

Friday, May 4, 7-9:30pm; and Saturday & Sunday, May 5 & 6, 8:30am-6pm

Prerequisite: Perky • Suggested donation: \$120

To pre-register or for more information contact Sally Albert or Gala Sly at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

SHAMBHALA TRAINING • LEVEL V: Open Sky

With Shelley Pierce

Friday, May 25, 7-9:30pm; and Saturday & Sunday, May 26 & 27, 8:30am-6pm

Prerequisite: Level IV

Suggested donation: \$120

Sharpening one's awareness, one finds the open clear sky of mind—a delightful source of wisdom and uplifted energy. Trusting our nature enough to let go into the present moment.

To pre-register or for more information contact Sally Albert or Gala Sly at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

SHAMBHALA TRAINING • LEVEL I: The Art of Being Human

Director TBA

Friday, September 21, 7-9:30pm, and Saturday, September 22, 8:30-6pm (to be confirmed)

Open to anyone • Suggested donation: \$90

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. Shambhala Training Level I 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 pre-register or for more information contact Sally Albert at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

OTHER PROGRAMS/EVENTS

Open House Talks

Mondays, 8-9pm

Open to anyone, free of charge or by donation

Our Open House program introduces participants to Shambhala Buddhist practice, teachings and culture. Senior Shambhala Centre students present the teachings, usually in talk-and-discussion format. Upcoming talks are outlined below. For the latest information see our events calendar at www.nelsonbuddha.com or email us at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

MAY 7

Befriending Impermanence

Talk, experiential exercises and discussion on making friends with the reality of constant change

With Robin Higgins and Sohan Ko

MAY 14

Peaceful Warriorship: Extending Ourselves with Clarity, Compassion and Courage

With Peter Maloff

MAY 21

Since this is a holiday Monday, no talk is scheduled.

MAY 28 & JUNE 4

No Time to Lose: Science and the Way of the Bodhisattva

A two-part exploration of the rational basis for compassionate action

With Deryk Wenaus

Movie Etc. Night

Friday, May 11, 6pm

Open to anyone • Suggested donation: \$10

6pm: COMMUNITY KITCHEN: Roast organic chicken and veggies, with head cook Lynn Frederick

7:30pm: MOVIE: *Travellers & Magicians*

Writer-director Khyentse Norbu (aka His Eminence Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche, an incarnate lama) infuses *Travellers & Magicians* with a thoughtful and contemplative Buddhist mind-set. Dondup is a young, impatient cigarette smoker from the city who has stopped by the small, remote village of Chendebji on his way to America, where he can't wait to make lots of money. But as he sets out on his long journey, he misses his bus and must try to hitch a ride down the mountain on the nearly deserted roads. He is soon joined by an old apple picker, a monk, a rice-paper maker, and the rice-paper maker's college-age daughter. As they wait for rides, the monk begins relating a story about a magic student, Tashi, who doesn't believe in magic and would rather start making money in the corporate world. But his brother, Karma, who does believe, concocts a plan that soon has Tashi stranded in the middle of the forest with a bitter old man and his beautiful, much-younger wife, Deki. Norbu magnificently intertwines the two stories, creating an enchanting, unforgettable film that is filled with heart, hope, and humour. (1 hr 48 mins)

RSVP to Lynn at nalandalynn@yahoo.com or (250) 352-1964.

This newsletter describes only some of what's happening at the Shambhala Centre. For the most complete and up-to-date listing of the Centre's current and upcoming programs and events see our events calendar at www.nelsonbuddha.com.

ELSEWHERE IN SHAMBHALA

Enlightened World

The Three Yanas of Shambhala Buddhadharma
With Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

Enlightened World provides an introduction and exploration of buddhadharma taught by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. The teachings will take the student through an overview of the three yanas—hinayana, mahayana and vajrayana—giving an idea of the breadth of the buddhist teachings as well as the unique path of Shambhala. This retreat includes meditation instruction, study, and contemplation in a natural retreat setting, and will provide an opportunity to meet the Sakyong

and practice under his guidance. Those who have been practicing meditation for at least six months are invited to attend this program.

SHAMBHALA MOUNTAIN CENTER, Colorado
August 1–5, 2007
www.shambhalamountain.org

DORJE DENMA LING, Nova Scotia
September 28–30, 2007
www.dorjedenmaling.com

For information about other programs and events taking place in the wider Shambhala world—or about any other aspect of the community—visit the new website at www.shambhala.org.

Opportunities in Nova Scotia

Want to experience retreat centre life at its best? Consider volunteering at Dorje Denma Ling this summer! Peaceful, nurturing land, panoramic views of earth, sea and sky, meditation sessions bracketing the day, community living with fellow sangha members, opportunities to attend program talks—Dorje Denma Ling offers all this and more!

There are volunteer openings in these areas:

- Kitchen (especially July 3 - 14)
- Facilities (all summer)
- Tech Support (June 1 - July 15)
- Finance (core staff position)
- Practice & Study (all summer)
- Gift Shop (from July 3 on)

Anyone who volunteers for a full calendar month receives \$100 program credit, and all volunteers receive free room and board.

For more information contact Melissa Howell at mhowell@dorjedenmaling.com or (902) 657-9085.

LOOKING CLOSER

Commentary on the Buddhist Dedication of Merit

By Russell Rodgers

This commentary is part of a series meant to help interested practitioners deepen their understanding of the purpose and meaning of Shambhala Buddhist chants.

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

*By this merit, may all attain omniscience.
May it defeat the enemy, wrongdoing.
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness,
and death,
From the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings.*

The next time you sit in meditation, take notice of how each of your thoughts is related to the last one. Sometimes the current round of thoughts settles a bit, and a string of thoughts comes up about something in the past. There may be a gap in time, but the thoughts still pick up a thread that was started before. Sometimes a string of thoughts will follow an event in the environment. Even in these cases, our thoughts about an event will probably follow a pattern that is familiar to us. The point that I am making here is that thoughts are instigated and conditioned by other thoughts. They follow patterns. Thoughts aren't independent actors.

Our thoughts determine not only how we see reality, but also how we create it because of our actions. Our actions are preceded by our thoughts. And then the patterns of thoughts arise again after the action. So what we have might be a rather stale, closed circuit. This is called relative reality. If we want to emphasize the entrapment, suffering and confusion, we call it "samsara." Every part of this pattern is related by thoughts and concepts to other parts of the pattern. Big has no meaning unless it is relative to small, man to woman, past to present, expensive to cheap. The key word here is "relative."

The Buddhist dedication of merit operates on two different levels: relative reality and absolute reality. In fact, Buddhists have a name for this: the Two Truths. To become enlightened we need to understand and work on both levels.

The idea of "merit" is very important in Buddhist practice. It is the means for working creatively with relative truth. Until we attain omniscience—the complete understanding of and oneness with our minds—we will continue to be ruled by habitual patterns and their results. This is another way of saying

that we are ruled by karma. Merit simply refers to those patterns that lessen suffering and lead oneself and others closer to the true nature. They are still patterns, mostly habitual, but they are beneficial ones, and we can use them to advantage.

Each time we meditate, we slightly shift our habitual allegiance from thought patterns to awareness. We haven't reached the self-sustaining pure wakefulness of a Buddha, the level of absolute truth, but at least we are creating beneficial habits of sitting practice that will eventually lead us there. When we open to others and help them, our thoughts become relative to their reality as well as ours. When we acknowledge enlightened teachers or study dharma, our relative conceptual world expands even more. This is merit, or "good" karma, and it will subtly alter our lives for the better. It's still on the level of thoughts and habitual patterning, but it's good patterning, good karma.

The chant begins:

By this merit, may all attain omniscience.

Omniscience refers to buddhahood, the level of absolute truth. At that level, patterning doesn't apply, because one resides at the source of thoughts and reality itself. One understands that the relative truth is just an expression of the absolute level of awakened mind and is ultimately basically good. One's wakefulness is not undercut by patterns. But until we get there we have to rely on merit, because our glimpses of omniscience are brief, partial, and not self-sustaining.

In the chant, rather than keeping the merit for ourselves, however, we dedicate it to others. We don't want to use the merit of the situation to solidify our patterns by promoting arrogance. That is why this chant is customarily said after listening to the dharma or sitting in meditation.

Furthermore, if we dedicate the merit fully and completely by following the meaning of the words as we speak them, we have the opportunity for a brief glimpse of the absolute open space of enlightened mind. This open space happens because we are momentarily giving away everything we are attached to, all our patterning. Paradoxically, this creates more beneficial patterning, more merit.

May it defeat the enemy, wrongdoing.

As Westerners, when we hear "wrongdoing" we think "sin" in the religious sense. Here it simply means harmful patterns, or "bad" karma. On the absolute or ultimate level, merit and wrongdoing are both just expressions of the energy of mind. On the relative level,

we add judgments and projections to these expressions after they have occurred. These judgments are relative to other concepts of how we want things to be. Since that is the level that we live on, the relative level is very important. If we can't manage the relative truth, then our lives and the lives of others will be filled with struggle and pain and we won't have the psychological resources to look for the absolute truth. We won't have the resources to attain the absolute level where it all begins.

In thinking about wrongdoing, it is important to remember that what is wrong for one person might be beneficial to another. It depends on the person's ability to see thoughts as just thoughts and to see circumstances simply, without projection or overlay. Sexuality is a great example of this. The same act can result in intimacy, openness and love, or attachment, jealousy and aggression. One cannot even very successfully put restrictions on it, such as "it's OK if you're married." In determining wrongdoing, one must have the insight to see all the results that are likely to happen for oneself and others.

*From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness,
and death,
From the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings.*

What is being talked about here is not just the sickness and death of the body, but the ending of situations that we are identified with. Birth is a chancy business and involves immense stress. When entering a new situation, one hopes that one's good karma will turn that situation onto a pleasant course, but one never knows, and that brings stress and the urge to manipulate. With sickness and old age, we struggle to keep all the elements of a given situation together when we sense that they could fly apart. Death is the final parting and dissolution of all the elements.

How are we to free all beings from birth, old age, sickness and death? We have to attain Buddha mind and show that to others. Only Buddha mind is not born, doesn't grow old or die. Ultimately, this is something that one has to prove for oneself by direct experience, once shamatha has tamed and strengthened the mind enough to look directly. However, a basic provisional logic for beginners like us goes like this: awareness, buddha mind, was not put together from constituent elements in a process of birth, so no effort is required to maintain it, and likewise there are no elements that will disperse in death. It is true that it can be obscured by thought patterns that apparently have a beginning and end, but these are only temporary obscurations, like clouds in the sky.

This logic is a bit of a stretch if we are still struggling in shamatha to maintain our awareness. It turns out that, ultimately, the struggle is unnecessary, and we just have to find the proper way to relax and open. This is much easier said than done. One way to understand this experientially is to reflect on the fact that awareness in meditation comes in spontaneous flashes that are not caused by our relative selves. There is just a sudden sense of being there. “We” are surprised. Then we go back to the breath and try to manage the situation that we have found ourselves in. It is as though there is an obscuring cloud of thoughts that has momentarily parted to let the sun shine through. We may, in retrospect, try to claim credit for this moment of wakefulness. But the flashes of awake-ness are brief and we cannot control them; we can only acknowledge that something has happened.

Because we cannot stabilize ourselves in this awareness, our ability to look directly at the mind is limited. We find it difficult to open properly because “we” are trying to open, and that is a contradiction in terms because our sense of self is one and the same with the clouds of obscuring thoughts.

It is good to know that, through the accumulation of merit, we can work with the clouds of thoughts so that there is appreciation of the sunlight, and we are in no hurry to close off the experience when it happens.

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 volunteering at the Centre, to name a few. Everyone’s participation is invited and appreciated.

Volunteering at the Centre

We currently have openings for volunteers in our children’s program, social action, flower arranging, graphic design, and renovations groups. We’re also open to exploring other ways people can contribute according to their interests. Let us know what interests you!

You can stay in the loop about what’s on at the Centre by visiting our events calendar at www.nelsonbuddha.com and/or by subscribing to one or both of our email lists. If you subscribe to the “Newsletter” list, we’ll send you our monthly newsletter and little else. If you subscribe to our “Active Friends and Members” list, you’ll get the newsletter plus reminders about upcoming programs and events and a small assortment of community-related messages. To join either list—or for more information about any aspect of Shambhala—email us at info@nelsonbuddha.com.