



Kootenay  
Shambhala  
Meditation  
Centre

## NEWSLETTER • November 2007

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"We have plenty of different kinds of meditation, we have plenty of different kinds of wisdom. Now, what are we going to do about it, and what am I going to do about it?"

—SAKYONG MIPHAM RINPOCHE  
2007 Harvest of Peace address

### WELCOME

The Kootenay Shambhala Meditation Centre is part of an international community of meditation centres founded by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, a Tibetan Buddhist meditation master, and now led by his son and lineage holder, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche.

Our Centre offers free meditation instruction, a clearly defined path of practice and study, a range of community activities and more. All our offerings are meant to help people of every description awaken their innate wisdom, compassion and sense of irony.

We invite you to join us in this journey of discovery.

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*For the most complete and up-to-date information about the Kootenay Shambhala Centre, please visit our website at [www.nelsonbuddha.com](http://www.nelsonbuddha.com) or contact us at [info@nelsonbuddha.com](mailto:info@nelsonbuddha.com).*

### REGULAR PUBLIC EVENTS

These events are open to anyone, free of charge or by donation. For the latest schedule information, see the calendar on our website.

#### Meditation Practice

**Sundays, 9 am - noon**

**Mondays, 7 - 8 pm**

**Thursdays, 5:15 - 6:15 pm**

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

#### Open House

**Mondays, 7 - 9:30 pm**

Our Open House program offers a friendly introduction to meditation practice, Shambhala Buddhist teachings and our community. • **7 pm:** Meditation instruction and practice (introductory instruction is available at 7 pm; follow-up instruction, at 7:30 pm) • **8 pm:** Talk and discussion • **9 pm:** Tea

#### Sadhana of Mahamudra

**New and full moon days, 7 - 8 pm**

*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.

#### Café Shambhala/Meditation Tune-Up

**First Sunday of the month, 9 am - noon**

Meditation instruction and practice, a couple of short talks, a light mid-morning community breakfast and a healing practice combine to create a sociable way for participants to perk up their meditation and benefit the world.

#### Children in Shambhala

**First Sunday of the month, 10:15 am - noon**

**(suspended indefinitely)**

Aimed at children ages 5 to 11, this program offers a fun introduction to Shambhala, with yoga, mindfulness-

awareness-related activities, storytelling and refreshments.

## TIDBITS

### Distance learning

Interested in deepening your understanding and experience of Shambhala Buddhist teachings but unable to come to the Shambhala Centre? Well, how about participating online?

Since September 2006, our Centre has been running a distance learning program, offering Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies courses on the Internet as a way of making these teachings available to people who can't participate in person.

Each online course comprises four main aspects:

1. Reading assignments
2. Contemplation questions
3. Audio recordings of the classes
4. Support from a meditation instructor

The courses, led by senior Shambhala Centre practitioners, are open to anyone, on a suggested-donation basis (see our Generosity Policy). The next scheduled online course—Karma & the Nidanas—starts November 8th.

For more information, visit our website.

## GENEROSITY POLICY

The Kootenay Shambhala Meditation Centre thrives because of the generosity of its program participants, friends and members. Recognizing that generosity, trust and openness are interconnected, we offer all of our programs on a suggested-donation basis and welcome participants to donate less or more than the suggested amounts as they choose.

## MEDITATION INSTRUCTION

Mindfulness-awareness meditation is the foundation of all Shambhala activity. Free instruction in this practice is perhaps our Centre's most valuable offering. We offer introductory instruction to newcomers and follow-up instruction to experienced practitioners on Monday evenings, as part of our Open House program, and at other times by appointment. We encourage anyone

interested in a close exploration of the path of meditation to work regularly with a meditation instructor. For more information, visit our website.

## CORE PATH PROGRAMS

As currently presented at the Kootenay Shambhala Centre, the Shambhala Buddhist path consists of three interconnected elements, each grounded in mindfulness-awareness meditation.

- **Buddhist Study** is offered primarily through the Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies, a curriculum of weeknight courses and weekend programs that presents a thorough introduction to Buddhism in general and Tibetan Buddhism in particular.
- **Shambhala Training** is a sequence of weekend workshops that emphasizes embodying bravery, gentleness and wakeful intelligence in every sphere of human activity.
- **Contemplative Arts** are a vehicle for integrating mindfulness and awareness into everyday life.

We invite everyone to explore any of these offerings to the degree they want. Altogether, this training is a big part of the preparation students require to attend Shambhala seminars and other advanced programs and engage in subtler practice and study.

### Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies Karma & the Nidanas

With Cameron Wenaus

Thursdays, November 8 - December 13, 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Open to anyone • Online participation possible

Suggested donation: \$60

Pre-registration requested

Karma—cause-and-effect action—can be broken down into twelve links, or nidanas. In this course we look at how these links work together, how the vicious circle of confusion and suffering arises and therefore how it can cease, allowing innate wisdom to manifest. For more information, visit our website or contact Jim Northcote at [info@nelsonbuddha.com](mailto:info@nelsonbuddha.com).

## **Shambhala Training Windhorse**

**With Paul Warwck**

**Friday, November 30, 7 - 9:30 pm; and Saturday  
& Sunday, December 1 & 2, 8:30 am - 6 pm**

**Prerequisites apply • Suggested donation: \$120**

**Materials fee: TBA**

In this program, one studies the text that gives the instruction for "raising windhorse," which opens the heart and refreshes one's confidence. The practice is a way to bring about skillful and heartfelt social engagement, enabling the warrior to go forward in the midst of whatever challenges occur. For more information, visit our website or contact Sally Albert at [info@nelsonbuddha.com](mailto:info@nelsonbuddha.com).

## **OTHER PROGRAMS/EVENTS**

### **November Open House Talks**

**Mondays, 8-9pm**

**Open to anyone, free of charge or by donation**

Our Open House program offers a friendly introduction to meditation practice, Shambhala Buddhist teachings and our community. Senior or intermediate Shambhala Centre practitioners present the teachings, typically in talk-and-discussion format. Upcoming talks are listed below.

#### **November 5**

**Dzogchen ("Great Perfection") for Beginners**

With Deryk Wenaus

#### **November 12**

**What Is Real? (Part 1)**

With Greg Higgs

#### **November 19**

**What Is Real? (Part 2)**

With Greg Higgs

#### **November 26**

**What Is Real? (Part 3)**

With Greg Higgs

For the latest information, see the calendar on our website.

## **Potluck Supper and Slide Show: "Our Lineage Origins in Eastern Tibet"**

**With Acharya Allyn Lyon and Russell Rodgers**

**Thursday, November 1, 6 pm**

**Everyone is welcome**

Kootenay Shambhala Centre member Russell Rodgers recently toured many of the places that Shambhala founder Trungpa Rinpoche frequented in Tibet. He will show slides of the Surmang monasteries, the retreat place of Dorje Kyung Dzong, and the mountain where Trungpa Rinpoche discovered many terma (hidden teachings) as a young teenager. Russell will also show slides of the monasteries of Trungpa's dharma brother Thrangu Rinpoche, and his teachers Jamgon Kongtrul of Sechen and Dzongsar Khentse of Palpung and others.

The monasteries of Eastern Tibet are in the process of massive reconstruction and dharmic revival. At one of the places Russell visited, 10,000 nuns and 5,000 monks had gathered in rude shelters to hear teachings by a locally famous teacher, Achu Rinpoche. In contrast to Central Tibet where the Chinese government has been quite repressive, the news from the Kham and Amdo regions is quite upbeat.

A potluck supper with Acharya Allyn Lyon will precede the slide show!

### **Teacher Training Introductory Class**

**With Russell Rodgers**

**Wednesday, November 14, 7 - 9:30 pm**

**Open to Shambhala members • Free of charge**

Russell Rodgers is launching a peer-based Teacher Training program with this introductory class, open to any Shambhala member who wishes to develop his or her dharma teaching skills. For more information, including teacher training resource materials, contact Jim Northcote at [info@nelsonbuddha.com](mailto:info@nelsonbuddha.com).

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*This newsletter describes only some of what's happening at our Centre. For the most complete and up-to-date listing of the Centre's current and upcoming programs and events, visit our website at [www.nelsonbuddha.com](http://www.nelsonbuddha.com).*

## ELSEWHERE IN SHAMBHALA

**Pacific Northwest Meditation Retreats**  
With John Osajima  
Camp Pringle, Shawnigan Lake, BC  
December 8, 2007 - January 5, 2008  
Open to anyone  
From \$315

The theme of this year's Pacific Northwest one-week, two-week and one-month winter meditation retreats is "the time is now." These retreats are designed for both new and experienced meditators. The focus will be the mindfulness-awareness practices of the Shambhala Buddhist tradition. For more information and to register, go to [nelsonbuddha.com/dathun/](http://nelsonbuddha.com/dathun/)

**Mahamudra Retreat**  
With Scott Wellenbach  
Camp Pringle, Shawnigan Lake, BC  
December 15 - 29, 2007  
Prerequisites apply  
From \$620

The nature of mind teachings, known as *mahamudra* in the Kagyü tradition, are considered the heart essence of all the teachings. During this two-week retreat, guided by the seminal mahamudra text *Pointing Out the Dharmakaya*, by Wangchuk Dorje, Karmapa IX, we will practice shamatha and vipashyana mahamudra to clarify and stabilize our experience of the nature of mind. For more information and to register, go to [nelsonbuddha.com/dathun/](http://nelsonbuddha.com/dathun/)

**Stroke of Ashe and Gesar Sadhana**  
**Weekthün**  
With Shelley Pierce and Ben Hines  
Camp Pringle, Shawnigan Lake, BC  
December 29, 2007 - January 5, 2008  
Prerequisites apply  
From \$340

This intensive will deepen and expand one's advanced Shambhala practice experience and understanding of Windhorse. The program will include daily sessions of stroke and Gesar sadhana practices, talks, discussions and Enriching Presence practices. For more information and to register, go to [nelsonbuddha.com/dathun/](http://nelsonbuddha.com/dathun/)

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*For information about other programs and events taking place in the wider Shambhala world—or about any other aspect of the community—visit [www.shambhala.org](http://www.shambhala.org).*

## LOOKING CLOSER

### Commentary on *The Four Dharmas of Gampopa*

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.*

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*Grant your blessings so that my mind may be one  
with the dharma.*

*Grant your blessing so that dharma may progress  
along the path.*

*Grant your blessings so that the path may clarify  
confusion.*

*Grant your blessings so that confusion may dawn as  
wisdom.*

First, I'd like to say a few words about the author of these lines, Gampopa. Gampopa lived at a very critical time in the birth of our lineage and helped shape its future in profound ways.

After his birth in 1079, Gampopa displayed much curiosity and openness to the dharma, and he received teachings from many gurus. He was also very interested in medicine and became a doctor. Gampopa married, and he and his wife were very much in love. When he was 24, she became terminally ill. Gampopa was unable to help her despite his medical training. Moreover, she experienced great pain and suffering and, according to Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche, was unable to experience her death properly. Gampopa asked her why this was so, and she replied, "I am not attached to possessions, nor wealth, nor faith, but I am very attached to you. Because you are only 24 years old, and you are very handsome, it is very hard for me to leave you. It is because my attachment to you is so very strong that I am unable to experience death."

Knowing there was no cure for her illness, and at the same time understanding that her attachment to him prevented her from dying properly, Gampopa promised her that he would take a vow of complete celibacy, never to marry another woman, and to become a monk. This promise released her from her attachment, and she experienced her natural death.

So, as he had promised his wife, he took the vow of a monk in the Kadampa tradition and went into retreat.

There he practiced meditation, saw many signs and had mystical experiences.

However, his practice in this tradition did not completely satisfy him, so he sought out one of the greatest yogis of all time, Milarepa. Under Milarepa's guidance, Gampopa's practice matured into enlightenment and he became Milarepa's main lineage holder and successor.

Gampopa's previous training enabled him to temper the spontaneous and relatively unstructured yogic style of his teacher (and the lineage altogether up to that point) with the structure and steadiness of his earlier monastic training. It fell to Gampopa's student, the first Karmapa, Tüsum Kyenpa, to start the tülku tradition. In this tradition, the previous abbot of a monastery reincarnates, and is found and trained to become the next abbot. This introduced an element of continuity into the transmission of the dharma from generation to generation. The steadiness of the monastic tradition enabled the dharma to flourish for many centuries, into modern times. The monasteries provided institutional continuity and training to large numbers of monks and nuns, while yogis and married lamas continued to ensure that the dharma did not lose touch with ordinary reality.

Gampopa died in 1053, and later his four main students spread his teachings by means of what are now known as the "four great" schools of the Kagyü lineage.

The chant *The Four Dharmas of Gampopa* opens:

*Grant your blessings so that my mind may be one  
with the dharma.*

Each line of the chant begins with the phrase "Grant your blessings..." It isn't clear who is being asked to grant their blessings, but a good rule of thumb in buddhadharma is that, even if there is a guru nearby, the teacher's mind is ultimately the same as yours in its basic buddha nature. However, since we don't experience ourselves as buddhas, we seem to need to experience enlightened mind as though it is external to us. So we supplicate enlightened mind as if it's outside.

The opening line also contains the phrase "one with the dharma." When we first hear the dharmic teachings, they may seem remote. We do not feel *one with* them. As we contemplate the teachings and compare them to our own experience, we gain confidence in what is being said. The final result of contemplation is that the dharma becomes part of us; it is how we experience the world. We are now one with the dharma.

Take the idea of karma, for instance. When we first hear about karma, it sounds like another example of religious belief: cosmic punishment of sin. Later, as we become more conscious of actions and their results, we automatically consider the karma inherent in everything we do or say. We realize that "sin" just means an action that causes suffering. It isn't sin in the Judeo-Christian sense. Karma isn't religious at all. It's ultimately practical.

Becoming one with the dharma has three stages. The first is *listening*, the second is *contemplating*, and the third is *taking to heart*, or becoming "one with." At the stage of listening, the idea of impermanence, for example, may seem like an exaggeration of reality, designed to scare us into giving up everything and joining a religion. After listening, we will probably go through an extended stage of contemplation, where we compare the idea with our experience. If the concept really rings true for us over a long period of time contemplating, then we begin to actually experience the world as change. We have become "one with."

*Grant your blessing so that dharma may progress  
along the path.*

This line reflects the fact that one's ego cannot attend its own funeral. "Dharma" progresses along the path, rather than our personal selves. The teachings direct us to examine the sense of self to see if it exists or not. Only after continuous searching over a lengthy period of time is it possible to say with conviction that the self does not exist. The word "dharma" has several different meanings. It can refer to the "teachings," or it can refer to natural law, in the sense of how things work. One can have the dharma of cooking eggs: when heat is applied, eggs cook. It can also mean "elements": for instance, the dharmas of existence. If there is no self, then dharma, with all its shades of meaning, might be a good word for what progresses along the path.

*Grant your blessings so that the path may clarify  
confusion.*

Most of us practice because we want to clarify our confusion. We practice shamatha to tame our minds and bring them into a sense of peaceful presence. However, we notice that this calm presence happens mainly during the gaps between thoughts. This has the paradoxical effect of making us more aware of what is on either side of the gaps between thoughts: confusion. When we become aware of confusion as just thoughts, it steals the power of thoughts and clarifies our perspective. With vipashyana, or insight, we see the origins of confusion and are able to drop projections and see directly and clearly.

*Grant your blessings so that confusion may dawn as wisdom.*

We can understand this line on two levels. On the first level, confusion may dawn as wisdom through a profound understanding of the mind from which confusion arises. At the pre-thought level, mind is like empty space out of which anything can appear. You can glimpse a bit of this in meditation if you try to find where your thoughts come from and where they go. This productive nature of the empty space of mind is sometimes called "luminosity."

If we are ignorant of the nature of our minds, we don't perceive luminosity directly. We perceive it in the form of thoughts and perceptions of solidified world that seems to be outside of the mind—"out there," with a perceiver "in here." So the first level of understanding wisdom is to experience everything that happens as the display of the luminous-empty mind. This mind is not the personal, discursive mind of the self. The sense of a thinker and its thoughts are just one part of a display in a much bigger picture. Understanding and living at that level is wisdom.

There is a second way to understand how confusion is transformed into wisdom. The five buddha families are an intermediate stage between the basic empty but expressive nature of mind that we just discussed and the well-developed thoughts and emotions that comprise our confusion. They are closer to our experience as ordinary people. I'll discuss them in next month's column.

If you are interested in finding our more about Gampopa, check out [www.kagyuu.org/kagyulineage/lineage/kag06.php](http://www.kagyuu.org/kagyulineage/lineage/kag06.php)

## COMMUNITY

The Kootenay Shambhala Centre is home to a diverse and vibrant community of about 35 members who share a connection to mindfulness-awareness meditation and the aspiration to realize a wakeful, joyful society. There are many ways to get involved—attending meditation practice sessions and celebrations, joining in recreational activities, taking courses, working with a meditation instructor, and volunteering, to name a few. Everyone's participation is invited and appreciated.

You can keep in touch with our Centre by visiting our website at [www.nelsonbuddha.com](http://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 (as a PDF file) 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, announcements about community activities, and an assortment of other community-related messages. To join either list, contact us at [info@nelsonbuddha.com](mailto:info@nelsonbuddha.com).

## MEMBERSHIP

We welcome everyone to become a member of the Kootenay Shambhala Centre. Becoming a member of our Centre means becoming a member of Shambhala worldwide at the same time. Membership is a way to express appreciation for what Shambhala provides and to help make it available to others.

Membership involves supporting the community in three main ways:

1. Practicing mindfulness-awareness meditation
2. Volunteering
3. Providing financial support

Membership also comes with several privileges. For more information, please visit our website at [www.nelsonbuddha.com](http://www.nelsonbuddha.com) or contact us at [info@nelsonbuddha.com](mailto:info@nelsonbuddha.com).