



Kootenay
Shambhala
Meditation
Centre

NEWSLETTER • December 2007

3rd Floor - 444 Baker Street, PO Box 136, Nelson, BC V1L 5P7 • 250-352-5560 • info@nelsonbuddha.com • www.nelsonbuddha.com

"Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away."

—PHILIP K. DICK

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

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.

For the most complete and up-to-date information about the Kootenay Shambhala Centre, please visit our website at www.nelsonbuddha.com or contact us at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

REGULAR PUBLIC EVENTS

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

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

'Tis the season...

It looks like December will be relatively quiet at the Shambhala Centre. The fall semester is winding down, several Centre members are heading off to assorted seasonal retreats, and we're scaling back our Open House program around Christmas.

But the month won't be entirely without buzz. On December 8th, we're co-hosting a fun-raising

fundraiser—"A Night for Peace in the Middle East" (see p. 3). Tickets are going fast!

Giving just got easier

In our ongoing effort to make our Centre as user-friendly as possible, we recently added a Donations page to our website. This page provides a way to make donations (for programs, membership dues and anything else) using PayPal, a secure and widely used electronic payment system. As always, we'd welcome suggestions for improvement.

On the horizon

Our winter semester core path programming is scheduled to start on January 10th with a six-class Shambhala Art program taught by Lynn Dragone (see below). For information about other upcoming programs and events, visit the Programs section of 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 other 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.

Contemplative Arts Art that Reveals Truth With Lynn Dragone

Thursdays, January 10 - February 14,
6:30 - 8:30 pm

Open to anyone

Suggested donation: \$60 • Materials fee: TBA

This core Shambhala Buddhist path program comprises Shambhala Art Parts 1 and 2. Shambhala Art is art that springs from the meditative state of mind. It is based on a collection of teachings by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche on appreciating the uniqueness of everyday sensory experience, the art of everyday life. Shambhala Art does not teach a particular skill or technique such as painting, sculpture, or dance. It is about the source of inspiration, its manifestation, and how it speaks to us. Seeing the simplicity of things as they are provides the ground for genuine creative expression.

PART 1: Coming To Your Senses

Art has more to do with perception than talent. Without clarity, all we express is our inability to perceive accurately. We have to perceive our world as it is before we can represent it in an art form. Part 1 is the exploration of the nature of our perceptions and how our thoughts influence what we perceive.

PART 2: Signs and Symbols

Part 2 deepens our understanding and experience of things as they are as opposed to how we think they are. Many of us have little clarity about this distinction. Perceiving this difference is fundamental to understanding signs and symbols. Signs have more to do with our thoughts and symbols more to do with our experience. It is said that one of the things that makes art, art, is that it communicates through signs and symbols: information and direct experience. If we want to communicate a felt experience as well as information, then we need to clarify what makes a sign a sign and a symbol a symbol.

For more information, visit our website or contact Lynn Dragone at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

OTHER PROGRAMS/EVENTS

December Open House Talks

Mondays, 8 - 9 pm

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

December 3

Working with Outer Resistance

With Jill Kelly

December 10

Working with Inner Resistance

With Jill Kelly

December 17, 24 & 31

No talks are scheduled

"A Night for Peace in the Middle East"

Gala Fundraising Dinner

Saturday, December 8, 6 pm

Tickets \$40 each

This fun-raising fundraiser, co-hosted by the Kootenay Shambhala Centre and "Keep the Beat," a high school social action group, will feature Middle Eastern cuisine (five-course meal), live entertainment, bar, and live and silent auctions. Dressing in any Middle Eastern wear will be entirely appropriate! Proceeds will be split 50/50 between the Shambhala Centre and Warchild, a non-

profit organization helping child victims of war (see <http://www.warchild.ca>).

Tickets are \$40 each—and they're going fast! To buy tickets or for more information, contact Cameron Wenaus at cameron@bluemandala.com.

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.

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/

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/

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/

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.

LOOKING CLOSER

Commentary on *The Four Dharmas of Gampopa* (Part 2)

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.

*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.*

In last month's column I talked in general about this chant—*The Four Dharmas of Gampopa*. In this column, I want to expand on the final line, about confusion dawning as wisdom. If we look at the world around us, we find that there is tremendous energy in confusion. Wars, environmental problems, personal struggles of all kinds—all that activity has its basis in confusion. If we could transform that energy into wisdom, that tremendous bank of energy could benefit instead of harm. In fact, this very transformation is the distinguishing feature of the vajrayana path.

The idea of confusion dawning as wisdom can be understood in a couple of ways. As I discussed last month, the primary level of understanding is to experience confusion as just the display of the mind. If we understand it at that level, the conceptual basis of confusion is seen as just thoughts, and an experienced meditator can realize the primordial nature of the mind that is producing those thoughts. This is not the personal, discursive mind of the self—the sense of a thinker and its thoughts are just one part of the display. Rather, this mind is understood to be like space: it is empty, but anything can appear in it. What appears could be thoughts, or it could be mental pictures of reality seemingly based on data from the senses. This mind also has the quality of awareness-knowing, or prajna. The space-like quality of mind is called emptiness, and the raw ability to manifest insight or appearances is known as luminosity. Confusion dawning as wisdom in this sense is seeing through the confusion to the primordial mind at its base. The confusion dissolves and basic mind manifests with great clarity.

The five buddha families are a second way to understand how confusion and wisdom are intertwined. The buddha families are an intermediate stage between the basic empty but expressive nature of mind and the well-developed, solidified thoughts and emotions that comprise our confusion. Unlike our normal thoughts and emotions, buddha family wisdoms retain, in their pure form, the character of the pure, primordial, luminosity-emptiness that enlightened people experience. If one is able to experience the pure nature of confusion, then one can relax with whatever arises. Fortunately, it is actually possible to have brief glimpses of how this might work. The transmutation of confusion into wisdom has its basis in awareness, which we all experience to some degree.

Ignorance, being spaced out, dull or sleepy, is the basic energy that happens when mind loses track of its own nature. Anything can appear in the empty space of mind, including ignorance. But once ignorance happens, a cascade of other mental events follows. If one looks at the ignorance directly, with an unbiased mind, then one can reverse the process of confusion and recognize ignorance as an expression of primordial mind. The wisdom here is the "wisdom of all-encompassing space," because the basic wisdom mind encompasses everything we experience. Being spaced out becomes spacious awareness. The similarity between the two is that one just lets everything be as it is. It could be laziness, or it could be spaciousness. The difference is ignorance. With awareness, ignorance dissolves, because the two are mutually exclusive.

If one is able to look directly at anger when it arises, then the fixated quality dissolves, just as any thought dissolves when held in awareness. The mind is able to reflect all perspectives equally and dispassionately, like a mirror. In fact, the wisdom of this family is known as "mirror-like wisdom." In its active form, it could have a pacifying effect by introducing different perspectives with great clarity. This kind of mental energy, called *vajra* could also slice through preconceptions like a sword, with crisp clarity. Vajra wisdom is connected with intellect.

In the case of pride, which is connected with the *ratna* family, the neurotic quality centralizes all positive qualities into oneself. Ratna family energy might accumulate lots of possessions, or focus on supposedly superior qualities within one's personality. The wisdom within pride has to do with awareness of all qualities, wherever they arise. Everything has a naturally rich quality in spontaneous raw experience, before it has been separated by thoughts into "good" or "bad," "mine" or "yours." Thus the energy of pride contains within it what is known as the "wisdom of equality." As with the other buddha families, the wisdom quality dawns when the basic energy is infused with awareness.

Passion and desire, associated with the *padma* family, is a sense of warm or even hot connection with an object. One is fascinated with the dance of seduction, not with owning the object of desire at the end of the seduction. In the midst of padma neurosis, one might simply move on to the next conquest. Sometimes very attractive people do not look beyond the project of being attractive, and ignore all other aspects of the relationship. When looked at with awareness, the obsession with the dance of seduction becomes tremendous interest in discriminating all the qualities of the situation. The wisdom here is "discriminating awareness wisdom." The warmth becomes compassionate connection that is always appropriate to the situation.

Neurotic speed, associated with the *karma* family, is connected to the attempt to cover all bases and hurry specific outcomes. It comes from the failure to acknowledge the natural unfolding of reality. The wisdom here is the "wisdom of all-accomplishing action." It arises when the unfolding of reality is happening in present awareness, and all the potential of unfolding in the future is also brought into awareness. The Vidyadhara Trungpa Rinpoche is a great example of this wisdom. He had thousands of students and started a university, several major practice centres, some 100 local centres, seminaries and a monastic abbey. He wrote many books, translated traditional texts and established ikebana (flower arranging) and tea ceremony schools. He wrote several books of poetry, and on and on. Yet he

never seemed to hurry. Thrangu Rinpoche is another example of someone who never hurries but has projects coming to fruition all over the world.

Although it is possible to describe the buddha families conceptually, or experience them briefly in an intensive weekend, the buddha family energies and the karmas (spontaneous actions) associated with them are very subtle in their pure form. When conceptualized, they can become a kind of Buddhist pop psychology. However, to truly become "one with" the buddha families and their associated karmas, there is no substitute for serious vajrayana practice. Deity practice helps to create a "sacred world" where everything that arises is seen as an expression of the deity. Within the practice, one is commanded to view confusion as pure, non-conceptual energy. In many of the traditional practices, the buddha families are in fact represented as deities.

Mahamudra is another vajrayana practice that is extremely helpful in becoming one with these wisdoms. Our basic introductory shamatha practice is a very beginning level of mahamudra. Fully developed mahamudra takes the basic sitting practice to its ultimate level. In this case, it is usually coupled with "pointing out" transmission, during which a guru points out the basic nature of mind. When, through much practice, the mind has become clear and stable, mahamudra techniques show one how to look directly, without the mind splitting into subject and object, at whatever arises. Then one can relax, without struggle, into the pure nature of whatever arises. This is the primary way that confused energies can dawn as wisdom.

The buddha family wisdoms are very intriguing to those of us who live on the confused side of these energies. Obviously, we need to hone our awareness through meditation practice to actualize these wisdoms on a consistent basis in our lives. However, it does help to have some intellectual understanding. If you would like to read more, you could check out the short but very pithy section on these wisdoms in *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, by Chögyam Trungpa. For a more lengthy presentation, from the psychotherapeutic point of view, read Irimi Rockwell's book *The Five Wisdom Energies: A Buddhist Way of Understanding Personalities, Emotions, and Relationships*. For a Dzogchen perspective, try *Spectrum of Ecstasy: The Five Wisdom Emotions According to Vajrayana Buddhism*, by Ngakpa Chögyam.

For experiential glimpses of the buddha family energies themselves, you could sign up for a Maitri Space Awareness weekend or take Levels 4 and 5 of the Shambhala Art program.

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 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.

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome everyone to become a member of the Kootenay Shambhala Centre. 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:

- Practicing mindfulness-awareness meditation
- Volunteering
- Providing financial support

Membership also comes with several privileges. For more information, please visit our website at www.nelsonbuddha.com or contact us at info@nelsonbuddha.com.