



Kootenay
Shambhala
Meditation
Centre

NEWSLETTER • January 2008

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"We are crying and laughing at once.
That is the ideal Shambhala
mentality . . ."

—CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA
*Great Eastern Sun: The Wisdom of
Shambhala*

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—donations are gratefully accepted. 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.

TIDBITS

Lynn Dragone steps forward

Much to the delight of the Kootenay Shambhala Centre's Council, long-time Centre member Lynn Dragone is taking big steps into Centre administration. In late November she started to serve as our Meditation Instruction Coordinator and Membership Coordinator. At our December 11th Council meeting, she agreed to take on Open House coordination as well. And at the same meeting, in an even bigger step, she agreed to serve for two years (circumstances permitting) starting on Shambhala Day, February 7th, 2008, as our new Centre Director! Surely this calls for a party!

MEDITATION INSTRUCTION

Mindfulness-awareness meditation is the basis 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 or contact Lynn Dragone at 250-352-1964 or info@nelsonbuddha.com.

CORE PATH PROGRAMS

As currently presented at the Kootenay Shambhala Centre, the core Shambhala Buddhist path consists largely 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 250-352-1964 or info@nelsonbuddha.com.

SHAMBHALA TRAINING

Level II: Birth of the Warrior

With Sally Albert

Friday, January 25, 7 - 9:30 pm; and Saturday &

Sunday, January 26 & 27, 8:30 am - 6 pm

Prerequisite: Level I

Suggested donation: \$120

In this weekend program participants examine their habitual tendencies, fears, and defense mechanisms, building on the foundation of the meditation practice introduced in Level I. For more information, visit our website or contact Sally at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

GENEROSITY POLICY

The Kootenay Shambhala Meditation Centre thrives due to 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.

OTHER PROGRAMS/EVENTS

January 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.

January 7

Meditation in Action

With Jigme Datse Rasku

January 14

Letting Go

With Robin Higgins

January 21

Nurturing the Seeds of Peace: A Report Back from Winter Dathün

With Candace Batycki

January 28

Bodhichitta: The Awakened Mind

With Candace Batycki

Winter Practice Intensive

January 30 - February 5

Open to anyone, free of charge or by donation

This program coincides with the end of the Tibetan lunar calendar year. According to Tibetan tradition, the year's end tends to be cluttered with accumulated personal, social and environmental chaos. So it's the perfect time

to slow down, intensify awareness and reconnect with our fundamental nature in the company of other practitioners. For more information, visit our website.

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 programs and events, visit our website at www.nelsonbuddha.com.

ELSEWHERE IN SHAMBHALA

For information about 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 Shambhala "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 the confidence of the golden sun of the great east,
May the lotus garden of the Rigden's wisdom bloom.
May the dark ignorance of sentient beings be dispelled,
May all beings enjoy profound brilliant glory.*

In general, dedications of merit turn us outward, away from gathering spiritual attainment as personal property. In the Buddhist dedication of merit, we simply dedicate the benefits to others. In the Shambhala Dedication, we dedicate it to human society. Let's see how this works.

By the confidence of the golden sun of the great east,

When the sun rises at dawn, there is brilliance, radiance and freshness. "East" doesn't particularly refer to the orient or to Tibet. It is simply where the freshness of dawn takes place, anywhere on the globe. The golden sun of the great east symbolizes the innate wakefulness of human beings. When we are completely wakeful, the world is clean and pure. It has original purity. Powerful awareness radiates like the rays of the sun.

There are two types of *confidence*: conditional and unconditional. At first, we develop conditional

confidence because we only have concepts about great eastern sun wakefulness. We have been told about it and we are entertaining the idea as a thought. When we are actually completely in the experience of wakefulness, present and aware, our confidence doesn't need the support of thoughts. Awakeness knows when it is awake. In fact, any thoughts that arise about awakeness tend to obscure it. Awakeness doesn't depend on external circumstances either: it dawns equally in pleasant and unpleasant situations. That is unconditional confidence—confidence that depends on nothing other than itself. It is confidence in our awakeness, on the spot, without judgements.

When one is wakeful, one sees directly. Things are what they are, in suchness, pure and good. One cannot argue that the sun and stars are good or bad: they just are. Later we can develop quarrels and appreciations, but these are added later to our memory of the experience. Our wakefulness, symbolized by the golden sun of the great east, can be temporarily obscured by confused thoughts and projections, but it is still there, like the sun in the sky, when the clouds of obscuring thoughts and projections have passed. Even the obscuring thoughts have basic goodness if we see them directly, on the spot, as suchness. On the level of great eastern sun, the experience can be of pure energy, or pure sensation.

May the lotus garden of the Rigden's wisdom bloom.

Rigdens are personifications of the vast, fresh mind of the great eastern sun. Just as lotus flowers grow out of the mud and are themselves unblemished by the mud, the Rigden's wisdom exists wherever ordinary phenomena are beheld in complete, present awareness.

The Rigden principle emphasizes the presence of fresh goodness in secular and societal contexts. There is no real difference between the seemingly more religious approach of Buddhism and the Shambhala Rigden principle. Both are attempts to designate something with words, and the choice of words depends on the perspective of the speaker. The actual state of enlightenment is beyond words.

*May the dark ignorance of sentient beings be dispelled,
May all beings enjoy profound, brilliant glory.*

So the logic of this dedication goes something like this: to the extent that one experiences the self-knowing confidence of the great eastern sun of wakefulness, then the lotus garden of the Rigden's wisdom will bloom in the society around one.

Trungpa Rinpoche, the writer of these lines, contrasts the striking imagery of the *dark ignorance of sentient beings* to the state of *profound, brilliant glory*. It makes you think, doesn't it?

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 Lynn Dragone at 250-352-1964 or info@nelsonbuddha.com.