



Kootenay
Shambhala
Meditation
Centre

NEWSLETTER • March 2008

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"By opening, by dropping our self-conscious grasping, we see not only the surface of an object, but we see the whole way through. We appreciate not in terms of sensational qualities alone, but we see in terms of whole qualities, which are pure gold."

—CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA, *THE MYTH OF FREEDOM*

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. Sunday sessions include mid-morning refreshments and, occasionally, short teachings and/or maitri bhavana healing practice. 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 is a text written by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. It embodies a way of invoking the energy and wisdom of the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages and cutting through all forms of dogmatism. The practice involves chanting the text and relaxing into the atmosphere that doing so creates.

TIDBITS

Message from our new Centre Director

On February 7th, 2008, Lynn Dragone formally became the Kootenay Shambhala Centre's director. Here is her first Director's message to our community for this newsletter.

As the new director I would like to offer a fresh view for the cultivation of community.

Our centre is a living phenomenon and to contribute we need to be in touch with the nature of ourselves as living phenomenon. We nurture this capacity as meditation practitioners. In turn a strong healthy centre means that we nurture each other primarily through supporting our understanding and experience of practice.

I see a community grounded in reason and cultivated energetically by wisdom and compassion. Fears,

anxieties and beliefs play themselves out here and is why compassion for ourselves and others suffering is necessary. Wisdom arising from communication and a willingness to engage with encouragement is also a vital ingredient to a strong community. Like body and mind our selves and our centre are 'not one' yet 'not two' either.

In my new position as director I am inspired by my faith in sangha. I hold a deep conviction that each one of us is uniquely capable and wants to contribute. The centre presents opportunities for people to come together and be engaged in the meaningful work of personal cultivation and the cultivation of a developing community.

"When we talk about enlightened society we're talking about a culture of human beings who know the nature of the awakened state of basic goodness and invoke its energy in order to courageously extend themselves to others."

—Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

Pitching in—at new times

The Drala Committee is happy to announce its new, improved (we hope) regular meeting time: Sundays, from 12 to 1 pm, except when pre-empted by other programming.

The role of the Drala Committee is to keep the Shambhala Centre at its sparkling best for the benefit of all. (To learn about *drala*, see Sakyong Mipham's book *Ruling Your World*.) The scope of the committee's work includes not just cleaning but also painting and decorating, creating flower arrangements, installing displays of good local art, and more. A suggested to-do list is posted on the Centre's fridge.

Please pitch in, one and all, at this new time, or *any* time it fits your schedule.

Extended community

True to our Centre's aspiration to reach out to anyone interested in us, and through the magic of the Internet (and karma), over the last 18 months we've built a far-flung extended community. We now have online Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies course participants in several Canadian provinces and territories and American states—and, amazingly, Brazil.

Printed calendar, anyone?

To make printed Kootenay Shambhala Centre events calendars easier to access, we've added a "Printable Calendar" link to the right sidebar of our home page and aim to keep a stack of up-to-date copies of the calendar at the centre. Fridge doors decorators rejoice!

MEDITATION INSTRUCTION

Mindfulness-awareness meditation is the basis of all Shambhala activity. Originating from Shakyamuni Buddha over 2,500 years ago, this practice is the art of resting the mind, opening the heart and appreciating what it is to be fully human.

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 the Meditation area of 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.

SHAMBHALA SCHOOL OF BUDDHIST STUDIES
Transmitting Natural Mind
With Tim Albert & Jim Northcote
Thursdays, February 28 - April 3, 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Open to anyone • Suggested donation: \$60 •
Online participation possible

This course (a.k.a. Lineage and Devotion) presents the principles of transmission and the student-teacher relationship as a key aspect of the study and practice of Shambhala Buddhism, explores the meaning and development of devotion, and introduces the central lineage figures of the Shambhala Buddhist tradition.

The course readings—from *Lineage and Devotion: A Sourcebook for the Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies* and a variety of other sources—are available as a package to course pre-registrants for \$35.

For more information, go to the Programs area of our website or contact Jim Northcote at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

GENEROSITY POLICY

Our Generosity Policy allows everyone to participate fully in the life of our Centre regardless of their ability to contribute financially. It states:

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.

To learn how you can make a donation, please go to the Donations page on our website.

OTHER PROGRAMS/EVENTS

March Open House Talks

Mondays, 8 - 9 pm

Open to anyone, free of charge (donations gratefully accepted)

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.

March 3

The Courage to Do Nothing

With Peter Maloff

March 10

Starting Where You Are

With Duncan Grady

March 17

No talk is scheduled

March 24

The Path: Formal and Personal Guidance

With Antonio Denicola

March 31

No talk is scheduled

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 *Homage* and *Invocation Chants*

By Acharya Christie Cashman
September 2000

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

On behalf of the Practice and Study Committee, it is my pleasure to offer a brief explanation of these chants in their entirety, so that the Shambhala wisdom tradition that is invoked by their recitation is more accessible. Both the *Homage* and the *Invocation* are based on the opening section of the terma (Tibetan: hidden treasure) text, *The Golden Sun of the Great East*, received by the Dorje Dradül, founder of Shambhala International, in October of 1976.

Stanza One: The Rigden King

*He who has neither beginning or end,
Who possesses the glory of Tiger Lion Garuda Dragon,
Who possesses the confidence beyond words:
I pay homage at the feet of the Rigden King.*

(The *Invocation* and *Homage* are identical except for the last line of each stanza. *Invocation*: *May the goodness of the Rigden King be present.*)

This first stanza is in the form of a verse typically found in Buddhist tantric literature, paying homage to a particular deity. In this case, the homage is to the Rigden King. *Rigden* is a Tibetan term meaning, "endowed with the family," which refers to the indestructible family to which all Shambhala students belong. The Rigden principle of primordial warriorship represents the wisdom contained in the open and relaxed mind before thought. In the later levels of Shambhala Training the student warrior is taught to invoke the Rigden principle through practices that open the heart on the spot and bring about a sense of majesty, strength, and insight. In this context, the notion of "king" is the reigning principle of unbiased meditative awareness.

The following is an excerpt from a public talk given by the Dorje Dradül on March 12, 1978 in Boulder, Colorado: It was printed, as you see it below, in the *Karma Dzong Community Newsletter*, July/August, 1978.

"When one enters the Shambhala world there are certain things one deals with—identification with the Rigden

fathers, the Rigden aspects, and a relationship with that. The way one identifies with the Rigdens is by actually becoming a warrior oneself. Not copying the Rigdens, not mimicking them, but actually those qualities become the warrior, and the warrior becomes those qualities. The warrior takes on the same qualities as the Rigdens. So there is total identification. There is a parallel in Buddhism—our Buddhist practice is total identification with Buddha, or awakening; Shambhala practice is total identification with the Rigdens, or earthholders. Even in the Buddhist tradition, when Shakyamuni became the Buddha, he was known as the world-renowned one, the ruler of the earth.

"So Rigden and Buddha are the secular and spiritual side of awakening. And the path of the Rigdens and Buddha's path are parallel paths. They go hand in hand but have their own particular practices, their own particular philosophy, with one thing in common. Do you want to guess what the one thing in common is? Shamatha-vipashyana practice. We talked yesterday about the fact that neither the Shambhala world nor the Buddhist world had any copyright on awakening, but I am going to make a rather outrageous statement: There is no awakening without shamatha-vipashyana as a basic, underlying quality. The link to awakening and the method, the path to awakening, is always associated with shamatha-vipashyana."

Stanza Two: The Ancestral Sovereigns

*They who possess great wisdom, brilliant and profound,
Who are ever just and benevolent to their subjects,
Who subjugate their enemies and are supremely
powerful—
By the golden yoke of their imperial rule
They ward off döns of plague, famine, and war—
Gesar Norbu Dradül, Ashoka Maharaja,
Emperors of Japan, China, and so on:
I pay homage to the ancestral sovereigns.*

(*Invocation*: *May the goodness of the ancestral sovereigns be present.*)

This stanza speaks of the "ancestral sovereigns"—a specific reference to four historical figures who were revealed to the Dorje Dradül through his Shambhala terma: Ashoka Maharaja of India, Prince Shotoku of Japan, Emperor Yung-lo of China, and King Gesar of Tibet. They are invoked here as brilliant leaders of humanity. Several members of the Shambhala community have researched their lives beyond the usual historical depictions, attempting to explore what may be their true place in history. Shambhala Training International has copies of articles and community talks on the sovereigns by Robin Kornman, Fenja Heupers

and Blake Thompson for the interested reader; the following, however, provides a very brief snapshot of each of their lives.

Generally speaking, it would seem that Dharmaraja Ashoka, Prince Shotoku, Emperor Yung-lo and King Gesar were able to overcome much of the social depression of their times and accomplish a great degree of cultural revitalization—in short, enlighten their societies. Although they were bound by various cultural norms, they had the chutzpa and vision to go beyond these norms. Their initiatives, generally speaking, were ordinary in nature but extraordinary for their time, providing basic care for the elderly, easing the voyages of travelers, relieving the suffering of animals, increasing accessibility of medicines, and bringing about reforms in education. Under each of their influence, Buddhism was elevated and established, and its ideals of benevolence and harmony incorporated into the culture.

The Indian King Ashoka lived in the third century BC.

Known as one of the greatest emperors of India, Ashoka is famous for his dramatic life change upon hearing of the horrors caused by his conquest of Orissa. He experienced extreme anguish and remorse and embarked upon a journey of personal transformation and awakening. He converted from Brahmanism to Buddhism and vowed to rule his people according to the principles of compassion and non-violence from that day forward. His activities were pragmatic and effective: he gave up the royal sport of hunting, prohibited the slaughter of animals for the royal kitchen, built hospitals for both animals and people, and constructed rest houses and dug-wells for travelers and had road-side trees planted for shade. He is perhaps most widely known for broadcasting teachings of personal and social well being. These became known as the "Edicts of Ashoka," and were engraved on large stone pillars and rocks throughout India. Ashoka convened the famous "Third Council" after the death of the Buddha in Pataliputra to settle certain doctrinal controversies. He also expanded Buddhism eastward to large areas of Southeast Asia, including Burma, Thailand, and Indonesia.

Prince Shotoku Taishi of Japan was born in 574 AD.

Seven hundred years after Ashoka, Prince Shotoku was instrumental in the transformation of Japanese culture. Although only the Regent to his Aunt, Empress Suiko, he exerted enormous influence, and is known today as the "George Washington" of Japan. Among his many accomplishments...

- He encouraged the addition of merit as a qualification beyond that of heredity as a requirement for holding public office.

- He issued the Constitution of 17 articles setting down Confucian principles of government and ethics, and introduced the Chinese calendar and Chinese aesthetic values to Japan.
- He was an influential royal patron of the arts. Under his direction, Chinese and Korean craft-workers were invited to Japan to build, paint and sculpt.
- Under his patronage, Buddhism became firmly established in Japan.
- He prohibited the killing of all animals; however, after much pressure, he conceded to allowing the slaughtering of fish, maintaining strict protection of all four legged creatures.

Gesar Mukpo of Tibet is said to have lived around the 11-12th centuries.

He is seen as a restorative figure in a time of social upheaval—a time when people's minds had become "hard as rock and stone." Most of our knowledge of Gesar comes from stories passed down from generation to generation through an oral tradition called the *Epic of Gesar of Ling*. Gesar's monumental task was to overcome the influence of four kings who, through their perverted aspirations, had spread harm to people and caused the destruction of the buddhadharma. In our current Shambhala teachings, these four kings have come to represent "the enemies of the four directions," or forces of materialism, which we are taught to directly engage and transform through our dignity and awakened heart. The stories of Gesar, his Aunt Manene and others put the teachings of lungta, drala, auspicious coincidence, authentic presence and so into a living historical context.

Emperor Yung-lo of China was born in 1360. As the third emperor of the Ming dynasty, Yung-lo, is known for his sense of overwhelming power, political acumen and expansive societal vision. He accomplished enormous projects. In the area of education, he had a body of scientific, cultural, religious knowledge gathered, printed and preserved in an eleven-thousand volume encyclopedia, which was published within the first few years of his reign. He oversaw the moving of the capital and the building of the Forbidden City in Beijing, and was dedicated to the flourishing of the arts—painting, art theory, drama and porcelain were at an all-time high in this dynasty. He promoted the principles of non-aggression and devotion, which he had learned through his teacher, the Fifth Karmapa, Teshin Shekpa, whom he placed above and before himself—a most unusual approach for an emperor of his time. It was Yung-lo who saw a vision of a black hat or crown upon the head of Teshin Shekpa, and physically replicated it. This is the hat that has been worn subsequently by the lineage of Karmapas to bestow the famed "Black Crown Ceremony."

Stanza Three: The Mukpo Clan

*The ones who are nobly born as Mukpo clan,
Who defeat the eclipse of the Great Eastern Sun
And sharpen the blade of primordial Ashe:
They are victorious over all their enemies, the forces of
materialism.
They see the Tiger Lion Garuda Dragon vision.
They are fearless in the midst of barbarian arrogance.
They tame the untamable beings.
They inspire the savages of the setting sun
Into the sophistication of the Great Eastern Sun:
I pay homage to the Sakyong and the Sakyong Wangmo.*

*(Invocation: May the goodness of the Sakyong and the
Sakyong Wangmo be present.)*

Within a Shambhala Center, one may take part in two streams or lineages, each with their own deep history. One consists of the religious or spiritual traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, specifically the Nyingma and Kagyü lineages, and the other is the secular and sacred Shambhala lineage. The Shambhala tradition has been passed down through a family lineage of warriors, the Mukpo clan—one of six main tribes of Tibet. (The "u" in "Mukpo" is pronounced as in the word "book.") The first Mukpo was the great warrior Gesar, the progenitor of the Mukpo family, and the vanguard of our Shambhala world. As we recite the complete set of morning and evening chants at a Shambhala Center, we are invoking the blessings and wisdom of both these lineages—described by the Dorje Dradül as being "in league" with one another.

Although both the Dorje Dradül and the Sakyong are better known by their Buddhist titles—Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Mipham Rinpoche—they are also proud inheritors of the family lineage of Mukpo warriors, and, therefore, retain the Mukpo name. In this way, they are holders of both lineages, as are their Shambhala Buddhist students. Those of us who are students of Shambhala Training and Nalanda, and followers of other religious traditions, are also quite naturally welcomed and included in the Shambhala community and family of Mukpo warriorship.

The last line of the stanza is a specific reference to Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. "Sakyong," is the Tibetan word for "Earth Protector." This is a Shambhala term referring to one who has been empowered or enthroned to protect this world, and is therefore known as one who joins heaven and earth—a Confucian term used to express the fusion of sacredness with the often gritty realities of our personal and communal lives. A "Sakyong Wangmo," ("Lady Earth Protector") embodies the principles of harvesting peace—fostering

communication and binding a society together with sophistication and culture. Either a Sakyong or Sakyong Wangmo can manifest as the ruler of a society if he or she is raised in this capacity from an early age.

Stanza Four: The Great Eastern Sun

*Radiating confidence, peaceful,
Illuminating the way of discipline,
Eternal ruler of the three worlds:
May the Great Eastern Sun be victorious.*

*(Invocation: May the goodness of the Great Eastern Sun
be present.)*

The Great Eastern Sun is the unsetting awareness, which arises as the power and dignity of human beings. Such lucid and direct awareness is magical—it is what opens the treasury of phenomena, the golden quality of phenomena. At the same time it is the experience of waking up from personal confusion and darkness to a connection with our own courage. Sometimes referred to as the genuine sun that rises in one's heart, the Great Eastern Sun's radiance is perceived through the senses as the luminosity of the "three worlds"—the worlds of heaven, earth and man—above, below and in-between. Such light is not ordinary light, but is the innate brilliance of mind that shows one how to proceed and how to care for others. Illuminating the deep, subtle and fluid energies of reality, the Great Eastern Sun brings unshakable confidence and doubtless precision to the warrior's mind.

Daily Use

Shambhala chants are traditionally recited in warrior posture, though that is not always necessary. Within the order of the liturgies, the *Homage* is recited in the morning after the Heart Sutra and/or the Mahayana Morning Liturgy, and the *Invocation* is chanted in the evening, after the *Dedication of Merit*. The *Invocation* follows the *Dedication of Merit* because it has the nature of being verses of auspiciousness, which traditionally conclude any liturgical recitation.

Purchase

Nicely printed copies of the *Homage* and *Invocation* are available for purchase through Samadhi Store, Ziji Book and Gift Catalog, Alaya c/o Elke Puts, and the Nalanda Translation Committee <nalandatranslation@shambhala.org>, as well as other Shambhala Center bookstores.

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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

Everyone is invited to become a member of the Kootenay Shambhala Centre. Membership is a way to express appreciation for what Shambhala provides and 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 go to the Membership page of our website or contact Lynn Dragone at 250-352-1964 or info@nelsonbuddha.com.