



Kootenay
Shambhala
Meditation
Centre

NEWSLETTER • June 2008

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"If the mind and body are flexible, the world is flexible."

—SAKYONG MIPHAM RINPOCHE
Contemplation for May 7, 2008
www.mipham.com

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 enjoy this journey of discovery.

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

REGULAR PUBLIC EVENTS

Everyone is welcome to attend these events. Participation is free of charge (donations are gratefully accepted). For the latest schedule information, go to the Clickable 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 (this month, June 3 & 18), 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

There's still space in our July retreat

As of this newsletter's publication time, on May 21st, we have room for three more participants in our annual public one-week meditation retreat at our retreat land near Nelson. If necessary, we'll start a wait-list. This year, the retreat's theme is "Joining Earth, Energy & Space"; the director, Shelley Pierce; the dates, Saturday, July 5th to Sunday, July 13th. See the program listing below for details.

Statement of diversity aspirations

At the Kootenay Shambhala Centre we aspire to put into practice policies and forms of governance that reflect our core vision and values. Below is one example. For others, please go to the Governance & Policy Highlights page on our website.

Shambhala Aspirations on Diversity, Accessibility and Compassionate Conduct

The teachings held by the Shambhala mandala challenge us as individuals to recognize and dissolve barriers that separate us from others. As a community of practitioners, we strongly encourage understanding of and respect for the basic goodness inherent in all individuals, social groups and cultures.

At this centre, we are committed to the teachings of our lineages, to the practice of meditation and meditation-in-action, and to genuine communication. As part of our intention to create enlightened society, these also help us gain insight into others' realities, appreciate diversity and work with conflict.

We strive to foster a welcoming atmosphere free of prejudice and to develop an inclusive and enlightened society with facilities fully accessible to all persons. Although some of our programs and events are open only to those who have fulfilled certain prerequisites, everyone is welcome at our centre regardless of religion, spiritual tradition or teachers, path of practice, opinions, class, nationality, culture, ethnicity, race, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, or physical, perceptual or mental abilities.

Our centre is committed to creating a practice, study, and work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. In addition to being bound individually and as a community to basic Shambhala and Buddhist standards of conduct, we are also citizens of the larger societies in which our centres are located worldwide and, therefore, must abide by public laws. These include, but are not limited to, laws pertaining to alcohol, drugs and sexual conduct. Each individual has the right to practice, study and work in an atmosphere that is free from discrimination.

As with all intentions, personal or collective, these aspirations chart our way forward, and it is our mutual responsibility to work together with each other to respect them. If any individual wishes to make recommendations to Shambhala, or is concerned that the actions of a member of Shambhala, including any of its office-holders, may not have been in accordance with these aspirations, please contact the Director of this Centre, the Rusung of the Dorje Kasung, or any appropriate person in the local leadership. Concerns about the behaviour of office-holders will be handled in accordance with

the procedures set down in Shambhala Care and Conduct, a copy of which is available at this centre.

GENEROSITY POLICY

Our Generosity Policy allows everyone to participate fully in the life of our Centre regardless of his or her 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.

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 curious about the path of meditation to work regularly with a meditation instructor.

Shambhala meditation instructors are senior Shambhala Buddhist practitioners specially trained and authorized to help people deepen and expand their conceptual and experiential understanding of meditation.

For more information, visit the Meditation area on our website or contact our Meditation Instruction Coordinator, 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 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 welcome everyone to explore these offerings to the degree s/he wants. 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. Upcoming core path programs are listed below.

For more information about the Shambhala Buddhist path, visit our website or contact our Practice & Education Coordinator, Jim Northcote, at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

SHAMBHALA TRAINING

Level I: The Art of Being Human

With Geoff Bannoff

Saturday, June 7, 9 am - 6 pm, & Sunday, June 8, 9 am - 1 pm

All welcome • Suggested donation: \$100

As human beings, we long for sanity, compassion and inspiration in our lives. According to the Shambhala teachings, this longing is a manifestation of basic goodness—the dignity and wakefulness that we all possess. Level I, a key introductory program, introduces the practice of meditation as a way to uncover and contact this innate dignity and wakefulness. For more information, visit the Programs area on our website or contact Sally Albert at info@nelsonbuddha.com. You can register online.

PUBLIC WEEKTHÜN

Joining Earth, Energy & Space

With Shelley Pierce

At Senge Ling

Saturday, July 5 - Sunday, July 13

All welcome • Suggested donation: \$450

As of May 21st, 2008, we have room for at least three more participants. If necessary, we will start a wait-list.

The Kootenay Shambhala Centre heartily invites 25 people to come celebrate with us at this summer's annual public one-week meditation retreat at Senge Ling, our retreat land near Nelson.

Senior Shambhala Buddhist teacher Shelley Pierce will lead us in exploring the principles of earth, energy and space and the way that experiencing the inseparability of these principles brings us into harmony with ourselves. As we discover this harmony—as we open our minds and hearts—we also discover our capacity and inspiration to benefit others.

The program, appropriate for newcomers and seasoned practitioners alike, will include:

- mindfulness-awareness meditation instruction
- eight to ten hours of meditation practice each day
- a range of other practices of joining earth, energy and space—among them, *lujong* (literally, “body purification”) exercises, mudra space awareness (a form of mind-body training), *ikebana* (Japanese flower arranging), and *oryoki* (meditative-style) meals
- talks based on Shambhala Buddhist teachings
- group discussions
- private interviews with authorized meditation instructors
- camp chores
- a celebratory closing banquet

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

The retreat is open to anyone, though preference will be given to those who plan to attend the whole program. The suggested donation is \$450 (see our Generosity Policy). A \$100 reservation deposit (refundable before June 1, 2008) is requested.

SHELLEY PIERCE is a highly experienced teacher of Shambhala Buddhism. She is also a qualified Sogetsu Ikebana instructor. She has served as Director of Shambhala Training International in Halifax and now works at the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham, Washington.

For more information, visit the Programs area on our website or contact Ojan Cromie at info@nelsonbuddha.com. You can register online.

OTHER PROGRAMS/EVENTS

June Open House Talks

Mondays, 8 - 9 pm

All welcome • Free of charge (donations gratefully accepted)

Our Open House program offers a friendly introduction to meditation practice, Shambhala Buddhist teachings and our community. Senior Shambhala Centre practitioners present the teachings, typically in talk-and-discussion format. Upcoming talks are listed below. For the latest schedule information, go to the Clickable Calendar on our website.

Monday, June 2, 8 pm

Arousing Bodhichitta

With Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche (video)

Monday, June 9, 8 pm

Sense of Humor

With Russell Rodgers

Monday, June 16, 8 pm

True Meaning of Success

With Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche (video)

Monday, June 23, 8 pm

Going Beyond Limits

With Lynn Dragone

Monday, June 30

No talk is scheduled

This newsletter describes only some of what's happening at our Centre. For the most up-to-date and complete listing of our programs and events, please 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 *Supplication to the Shambhala Lineage*

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 in the Shambhala Buddhist tradition for about 30 years.

In this chant, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche acknowledges the sources of the Shambhala lineage. There were four main lineages in Tibet: the Gelugpa (the Dalai Lama's lineage), the Sakya, the Kagyü and the Nyingma. Calling ours the "Shambhala lineage" was controversial at the time the chant was written, because it seemed to add a fifth lineage, marking a separation from our Tibetan heritage.

Some historical background is in order: Trungpa Rinpoche, our founder, was officially a Kagyü lineage holder, but his major teachers were Nyingma. When he came to the West, he found that Westerners seemed to miss the point when presented with practices that worked for Tibetans. So he began to adapt practices from his own tradition and from the Zen tradition in ways that would suit us. For instance, having beginners sitting on cushions as a group doing shamatha meditation is not a Tibetan tradition at all. It was borrowed from the Zen. Weekthüns and dathüns and seminaries for lay people did not exist in Tibet. Trungpa Rinpoche also added Shambhala teachings and practices, many of which also did not exist in Tibet.

Shambhala *culture* was embedded in Tibetan society. Some of what we now call the Shambhala lineage originated with the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, Bön. Trungpa Rinpoche greatly expanded these Shambhala elements into a path for Westerners, a path that would compliment his previously introduced Buddhist teachings. He felt that Western culture needed some help before it could be a suitable container for Buddhism on a large scale. The Shambhala teachings were his answer to that problem. However, at the time of his death, we still nominally regarded ourselves as Kagyüs, with a Tibetan, His Holiness Karmapa, at the head of our school.

To complicate things further, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, when he took over the reins from his father, studied mainly with Nyingma teachers. By that time, a

Tibetan visiting one of our more than one hundred centres around the world probably wouldn't recognize much of what we do, at least in its outer forms. However, if the visitor were perceptive, he or she would probably recognize that the inner heart of our teachings and practices synchronizes completely with the heart of the Tibetan tradition. So Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche took the step of naming a new lineage, the Shambhala Buddhist lineage, and wrote this chant, acknowledging our heritage and at the same time giving an outline of what would be emphasized in this particular school, Shambhala Buddhism.

*Primordial Rigden,
All-good Samantabhadra,
Great Vajradhara;*

The first three lines pay homage to three major sources of our lineage. All are similar in that they symbolize a source of inspiration in what Buddhists would call the *dharmakaya* level. At this exceedingly spacious level of mind, there is not even the appearance of any entities, such as observer and observed. There is only emptiness and luminosity. One could say that the *dharmakaya* level is a level of pure awareness, without the usual objects of such awareness. However, at this level, emptiness is pregnant with possibilities. These possibilities are at the pre-thought level, but they will have slightly different flavors as they develop out of the *dharmakaya* towards the level of symbolic thinking and finally to manifestation of physical appearances.

The Primordial Rigden is the symbolic source of the Shambhala lineage. *Rigden* translates as "holder of the family." In this case, the luminosity/emptiness represented by the Rigden will develop flavors of enlightenment embedded in life as lay people live it, surrounded by family and society at large.

Samantabhadra is connected with the Nyingma lineage and the "Great Perfection," also known as *ati* or *dzogchen* teachings. (See the discussion of the *Seven-Line Supplication to Padmakara* in the April 2008 issue of this newsletter for more on the Great Perfection teachings.) Samantabhadra symbolizes complete primordial purity and utter wakefulness. Vajradhara occupies a similar position with the Kagyü. Here, it could be said, the flavor will develop more towards *how* to look, step by step, into all aspects of our minds and discover the true nature.

*Lotus-born Padmakara,
Wisdom Yeshe Tsogyal,
Prahevajra, Shri Simha,
Holders of the ancient Great Perfection;*

These lines pay homage to the human founders of the Nyingma lineage. (See the commentaries on the *Seven-Line Supplication to Padmakara* and the *Supplication to Padmasambhava*—the latter is in the April 2007 issue—for information about Padmakara, also known as Padmasambhava.) Prahevajra was the first human in the ancient Great Perfection tradition, which is the specialty of the Nyingma lineage. Shri Simha followed shortly afterwards. It is difficult to find much historical information about them. It seems likely that Padmasambhava knew both and received teachings from them. Yeshe Tsogyal was Padmasambhava's consort. She became a powerful teacher in her own right. The two of them were largely responsible for establishing Buddhism in Tibet. Her influence is still felt because of the practices that she and Padmasambhava hid for future generations. Certain yogis, called *tertöns*, still find examples of these teachings when the time is appropriate for them to be found and put into practice.

*Tilo, Naro, Marpa, Mila,
Siddhi-accomplishing masters of mahamudra:
Please approach and grant your blessings.*

In contrast to the Nyingma lineage of the ancient Great Perfection, there are many stories and histories about the early Kagyü mahamudra lineage holders. Tilo, short for Tilopa, is said to have gotten the teachings directly from Vajradhara. While it is difficult to know what this actually means, it does seem that he tuned into the space-like potential of the *dharmakaya*, as symbolized by Vajradhara, and started a new line of transmission. The four lineage holders mentioned here started the Kagyü lineage. They could not have had more different personalities, but their relationships went far beyond the constraints of personal character. Tilopa started as a cowherd, worked for many years as a servant for a courtesan during the night and pounded sesame seeds to extract their oil during the day. His student Naropa was a university professor. Naropa's student Marpa was an irascible Tibetan farmer, and Milarepa, who received the lineage from Marpa, was an earnest but guilt-ridden murderer. Each was able to receive the inspiration of the mahamudra lineage and then pass it on to establish the Kagyü lineage.

*Dawa Sangpo, the other dharmarajas, and the twenty-five
Rigdens,
Who guide beings to the sacred land of Shambhala,
You are the sun and moon, the wish-fulfilling jewel.
Your brilliant mind is the ornament of the world.*

*Protect my vajra awareness.
Grant your blessings so that I may realize great bliss-
wisdom.*

With these lines we introduce the first lineage holders of the Shambhala tradition. The story goes that Dawa Sangpo, a king, requested the Buddha for teachings that would not require him to become a monk. Buddha sent his monks and nuns out of the room, and gave Dawa Sangpo teachings that could be practiced by lay people in the context of their usual societal obligations. It is said that the whole kingdom became a place where it was easy to practice and society was vastly uplifted. The twenty-five Rigdens are the kings who followed Dawa Sangpo.

*Gesar Norbu Dradül, you are the great activity lion.
All-victorious Sakyong, you reveal the treasure of
basic goodness
And radiate the Great Eastern Sun.*

Gesar was a king in ancient Tibet. He is the quintessential warrior of Shambhala, fearless in the face of psychological and physical obstacles. One sees depictions of him on prayer flags, riding his magnificent horse, magnetizing energy to overcome the degradation of human society. A Sakyong, or “Earth Protector,” is an enlightened ruler who protects the sense of sacredness of human existence. The Great Eastern Sun represents the inherently awake quality of mind. It is from the east because, at dawn, there is a sense of freshness and eternal new beginning.

*Ashe, the essence of life, fearlessly reveals confidence
and compassion;
May all discover the power of this magic.
The drala lineage of Mukpo, you bring about the new
golden age.
Grant your blessings so that I may liberate all beings.*

The Ashe stroke is part of the calligraphy of the syllable A, the first syllable of the Tibetan alphabet. It communicates the awake quality of Great Eastern Sun. It is likened to a sharp razor, cutting through the inherent aggression of any attempt to solidify reality. It is also a symbol of wakefulness, bravery, and gentle openness in the human heart.

*Buddhas, bodhisattvas, warriors, masters of the three
times,
You guide us along the path to liberation.
You awaken bodhichitta.
You teach us the great view of emptiness.
You reveal the joy of luminosity.
Transmitting awareness-wisdom,
You lead us to perfect enlightenment.*

*Grant your blessings so that I may realize my nature
As the profound brilliant Rigden.*

In these lines, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche makes the aspiration that we accomplish the completely awake, spacious state of the Rigden. He could have aspired that we realize our natures as Vajradhara or Samantabhadra, but he chose the Rigden instead. Perhaps this reflects the fact that unlike our predecessors, we are not, by and large, cave yogis or monks and nuns. We are a special category: householder-yogis. This category of practitioners also existed in Tibet, Marpa being an example. However, Western society doesn't provide much support for recluse yogis or monks and nuns. The path of the householder-yogi is by far the most prevalent here, and the most appropriate for most people.

It has been said that, although the path of the householder is more difficult, it is the most profound. It does not shy away from all the energies of family relationships and society at large. When we have transformed these energies, the possibility arises that we can enlighten the society around us. This is the goal of the Shambhala Buddhist lineage.

COMMUNITY

The Kootenay Shambhala Centre is home to a wonderfully diverse and vibrant community of about 35 members. We share a connection to mindfulness-awareness meditation and the aspiration to create 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. We invite and appreciate everyone's participation!

To learn how you can join in, visit the Programs area on our website, subscribe to one or both of our email lists, or contact Lynn Dragone or Jim Northcote (or any other Centre member) 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 on our website or contact our Membership Coordinator, Lynn Dragone, at 250-352-1964 or info@nelsonbuddha.com.