



Kootenay
Shambhala
Meditation
Centre

NEWSLETTER • July 2008

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“Trust and compassion for oneself bring inspiration to dance with life, to communicate with the energies of the world.”

—CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE
Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism

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 all kinds 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, July 2 & 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 schools of Tibetan Buddhism and cutting through all forms of dogmatism. The practice involves chanting the text and relaxing into the atmosphere that doing so creates.

TIDBITS

Schedule note

The Shambhala Centre will be closed from Saturday, July 5th to Sunday, July 13th for our annual public one-week meditation retreat at our rural retreat land (for information about this program see the listing below).

Returning from France

By Lynn Dragone

Shambhala Centre Director Lynn Dragone wrote this article after returning in mid-June from a major Shambhala Buddhist dharma program at Dechen Chöling, the European Shambhala residential practice centre, located near Limoges, France.

Entering the mandala at Dechen Chöling reminded me of the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel. So many languages overlapping. Unfamiliar gaps of silence

punctuating the familiar English flow of greetings. Everyone seemingly in a minority.

This mandala brought hidden assumptions to light. Does there have to be a “right” way and a “wrong” way of doing things? Maybe some people just aren’t as talkative or smiley as others. Having respect and curiosity and allowing others to be what they are make relationships so much easier. Despite our habitual tendency to avoid discomfort, a sense of awareness prevailed, and our strength as a community of meditators and the vastness of Shambhala vision gave us a much richer view of each other.

The warriorship model and teachings of Gesar of Ling were invigorating and potent. The Gesar Festival gathering included His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche (Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche’s father-in-law), Gyetrul Jigme Rinpoche (the Sakyong’s brother-in-law), the Sakyong himself, and sangha members from across Europe, North America and New Zealand. At the gathering’s end, we felt like a family. Now our challenge (and possibly our gift to the wider world) is getting along in everyday circumstances.

I would encourage any practitioner to consider attending any program at Dechen Chöling. Not only is it set in beautiful French countryside, with centuries of history embedded everywhere you look, but it is also a place of such cultural diversity that the place itself conveys a powerful teaching on interconnectedness. Practicing in a multicultural mandala gave me a tender appreciation for the efforts we are making to wake up!

On the horizon

Our fall schedule planning is well underway, and it looks as if September will bring another lively ‘school’ year at the Shambhala Centre. Check out the Programs area on our website to see some of what’s coming.

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 Jim Northcote, at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

PUBLIC WEEKTHÜN
Joining Earth, Energy & Space
With Shelley Pierce
At Senge Ling
Saturday, July 5 - Sunday, July 13
All welcome • Suggested donation: \$450

This program appears fully booked. But registrant cancellations are common, so we're keeping 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 accommodating 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.

CONTEMPLATIVE ARTS
Space, Form & Passion: The Mischief of
Awareness in Movement & Stillness
With Rick Merrill
August 6 - 9, 10 am - 1 pm
All welcome • Suggested donation: \$125

The premise of this four-part movement workshop is that everyone has a body-mind that is awake, curious, perfectly suited to embody wisdom, warmth and play. So, the workshop is appropriate for anyone, regardless of her/his dance or movement experience.

The program will foster a non-judgmental, supportive atmosphere for exploring our physicality, loosening up assumptions held in our bodies, and inviting greater intimacy with everyday life. By learning to appreciate our immediate experience, the richness of our sensory world, we find the confidence to be, simply, as we are, free to live our lives with a playful sense of dance.

The program will include:

- Individual and collaborative exercises in improvisation and composition for exploring aspects of our physicality: movement and stillness, space and form, intuition and knowing, communication and relationship
- Discussions to help us integrate experience of these aspects into our daily lives. (Please bring a journal or notebook to record your impressions during the program.)

RICK MERRILL began dancing with Barbara Dilley and Arawana Hayashi at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado in 1974. He later studied and performed with many teachers

and artists in New York City. For many years he directed and performed with his own group based in NYC and Barcelona, Spain. He has taught dancers, actors and children at universities, experimental schools and festivals throughout the U.S. and Europe. He is particularly interested in movement and dance, improvisation and performance as practices that highlight awareness, compassion and humor and remind us they are inseparable from everyday life. Rick is a student of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. He lives in Bellingham, Washington.

For more information, visit the Programs area on our website or contact Lynn Dragone at 250-352-1964 or info@nelsonbuddha.com. You can register online.

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 *Fulfilling the Aspirations of the Vidyadhara the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche*

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. The other commentaries in the series are available on the About Our Newsletter page on our website.

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 midst of our discursive thoughts, aspiration chants serve to remind us of our dharmic vision. As well, if one consciously aspires to something, there is a much greater chance that it will come to pass. So the chant *Fulfilling the Aspirations of the Vidyadhara the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche* reminds us of dharmic vision.

After Trungpa Rinpoche died, Thrangu Rinpoche, a close friend and dharma brother, wrote this chant for Trungpa Rinpoche's students. Thrangu Rinpoche is one of the great Tibetan teachers who were instrumental in helping the sangha recover its equilibrium when our teacher died. The chant covers all the major aspects of the path that Trungpa Rinpoche laid out for his students. It also helps to remind us of him and the aspirations that he shared with us. There are many technical terms; however, as one begins to understand the language, the path ahead and the vision become clear.

The chant opens:

NAMO GURU-KARMAKAYA

This means, roughly, "I pay homage to the manifestation of the guru's activity." Many high Tibetan teachers, including Thrangu Rinpoche, regarded Trungpa Rinpoche as a *siddha*, a person whose activities and powers were truly extraordinary. He transmitted Tibetan buddhadharma across a huge cultural barrier using methods that were unique and surprising to his fellow Tibetans. He did this in ways that not only protected the heart of the teachings but also actually worked for Western lay practitioners (as opposed to Tibetan monastics and cave-dwelling yogis).

In the first paragraph, Thrangu Rinpoche calls to mind the "utpatti and sampannakrama of the anuttarayoga tantra of the secret mantra vajrayana..." *Utpattikrama* refers to a class of practices that use the mind's basic luminosity to create visualizations of deities. In contrast to our normal unconscious projections and fantasies, these projections of deities are ideally done in full, present self-awareness of the mind that is making the projection. The deities are supposed to embody aspects of one's own enlightened nature. After generating the visualization, one does *sampannakrama*, or resting in the aware nature of one's own mind, without applying any effort at all. The alternation between the suggestive qualities of the visualization and the effortless, undirected resting is a powerful means to create insight into the mind itself.

The *anuttarayoga tantra* of the secret mantra vajrayana is a specialty of the Kagyü lineage. It includes the ngöndro, Vajrayogini, Chakrasamvara, and Kalachakra deity practices. The process of visualization is for the eye sense, and mantra works for the ear sense. Each practice highlights a different aspect of enlightened mind. The word *tantra* means "thread," or "continuity." Underlying birth, death, the bardo or intermediate state, and all of our experiences is a continuity of basic mind.

In order to do the vajrayana practices with proper effect, one has to have instruction from a guru who has realized that particular practice. Vajrayana is called “secret” for two reasons. Its true meaning is self-secret. That is, only those who are ready to understand it can know its meaning; for others the meaning will remain hidden. It is also secret because it is only effective if a guru is able to initiate the student into the true sense beyond the words. This kind of instruction is called “oral instruction.” Usually, but not always, it takes place in the presence of the guru. These days, some kinds of oral instructions can be passed along through videotapes and other modern means.

Further on, the chant continues:

...may we easily attain the supreme and ordinary siddhis. Having attained them, may we instruct and teach fortunate students, and may this spread throughout the entire expanse of Jambudvipa, completely fulfilling the wishes of this lord.

Ordinary *siddhis* are powers over the phenomenal world, such as telepathy and so on. Supreme *siddhis* are the recognition and ability to remain in the utterly wakeful enlightened nature. Thrangu Rinpoche makes the aspiration that this “spread throughout the entire expanse of Jambudvipa.” *Jambudvipa* is the southern continent in ancient Indian cosmology. It is the world that we inhabit, and in the Indian cosmology, it is where people are open to receiving the dharma.

...the excellent tradition of Shambhala, which arose as his mind terma...

Terma refers to a discovered dharma text or artifact. “Mind terma” refers to a dharma text that arises effortlessly and spontaneously in the mind of a great master. It is not deliberately composed in the usual way. There is a sense that it comes from somewhere else, perhaps planted in the there by a great yogi of the past who recognized that the time would come when a particular set of teachings would be appropriate.

Trungpa Rinpoche received several Shambhala texts as mind terma. The Vidyadhara felt strongly that the Shambhala teachings were particularly important for the West at this time. He thought that these teachings could transform society, particularly in certain places that he felt were more receptive, like the Maritime provinces of Canada. He envisioned a transformed society that could be a container for the Buddhist teachings at time in the future when the rest of the world would become unreceptive to buddhadharma.

In particular, in this place on which this lord walked, which he blessed, and which he prophesied—the land of Kalapa and so forth—may drala and werma gather like clouds.

Kalapa was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Shambhala. The Vidyadhara felt that in the future a society like Shambhala would arise in the Maritimes. Historically and mythically, Shambhala was a kingdom where the whole of society was uplifted by the principles of wakefulness and gentleness. *Dralas* and *wermas*, the uplifted energy that gathers in power places, would “gather like clouds.” These are variously considered as local protectors, or embodiments of natural awakened energy of the world. “Werma” is another name for drala. Werma may also be messengers of the dralas. They are a kind of enlightened warrior principle. The Vidyadhara taught that the energy of the dralas could be magnetized to a particular place, making it a power spot. It is up to the inhabitants of that place to magnetize the dralas by maintaining a respectful attitude towards the inherent sacredness of the phenomenal world, and by doing certain practices.

Through completely increasing and expanding the teaching of Vajradhatu, the Dharmadhatus and Shambhala, may we be able to fulfill effortlessly and spontaneously all the buddha activity and wishes of the great vajra-vidyadhara, the supreme Chökyi Gyatso.

As well as laying a foundation for a future Shambhalian society, the Vidyadhara created a structure for disseminating the Buddhist teachings. *Dharmadhātu* is the name for a level of enlightened mind that is extremely spacious and empty. *Vajradhatu* is the name for an even higher and more subtle and empty level of mind. Accordingly, “Dharmadhatus” were the names originally given to what are now called Shambhala Centres. “Vajradhatu” was the name given to the central governing organization, now called Shambhala.

For having created the structures for transmitting Buddhist and Shambhalian enlightenment, Thrangu Rinpoche praises Chökyi Gyatso (another name for Trungpa Rinpoche) as a “vajra-vidyadhara.” *Vajra* means “indestructible.” *Vidyadhara* means “wisdom holder.” Wisdom in this case means resting at a pre-thought level, before conventional interpretations of reality have arisen. Such a person is not constrained by convention, and can reflect all the energies of the world in completely unexpected and creative ways. Another name for this kind of realization is “crazy wisdom.”

What follows are five verses that describe the path laid out for the Vidyadhara's Western students. Most are self-explanatory, so we'll just deal with the high points. First we train in shamatha, striving towards one-pointed attention to the breath and attending month-long sittings such as dathün. We train on the paths of the "greater and lesser vehicles." The lesser vehicle contains the foundation teachings of the hinayana. At this stage we learn shamatha meditation and renounce attachment to thoughts. We also absorb some basic Buddhist theory about suffering, its origin in ego, and how the impression of ego arises. The greater vehicle is the mahayana, which brings in the more subtle teachings about buddha nature, emptiness and compassion. Hinayana is indispensable, but it is called "lesser" because it aims for individual liberation. Mahayana is called "greater" because it aims for the liberation of all beings.

*Through the practice of the general and special preliminaries—
By purifying our beings, completing great accumulations of merit,
And by the power of the guru's blessing entering us—
May devotion, the root of dharma, be firmly planted.*

The general preliminaries, also called "the four reminders," are contemplations of (1) the preciousness of human birth, (2) impermanence and death, (3) the inevitability of karmic cause and effect, and (4) the sufferings of samsara. The special preliminaries are four practices known as *ngöndro*. The first is taking refuge in the Buddha, dharma and sangha. This is usually combined with prostrations and arousing compassion. This practice is essentially a contemplation of devotion and what that means for the practitioner, personally. The second, Vajrasattva mantra, is an extended contemplation of innate purity, using visualization and mantra. The third generates merit, or good karma, by continuously offering one's world in the form of a mandala. The fourth, guru yoga, attunes one to the mind of the guru. This is called receiving blessings because then one can experience the world as the guru experiences it.

*Prajna in the form of the mother Varahi,
Supreme upaya in the form of the father
Chakrasamvara—
Through the practice of the unified utpatti and
samppannakrama
May we attain supreme siddhi in this life.*

Having prepared him- or herself with the preliminaries, the student is prepared to undertake the practice of Vajrayogini, also known as "Varahi." In this practice, one visualizes oneself as a semi-wrathful feminine deity.

Varahi is connected with the student's recognition of the feminine principle: emptiness, and the insight (*prajna*) that uncovers that emptiness.

Having completed the practice of the feminine Varahi, one can move on to the practice of a male deity, Chakrasamvara, in union with Varahi. *Upaya*, or skillful means, is associated with the male aspect. Varahi and Chakrasamvara are the principle deity practices of the Kagyü lineage. When one brings the visualized forms together with the present awareness of the mind that is projecting them, then this is the unification of *utpatti* (visualized forms) with *samppannakrama* (resting the mind in its own natural awake state). It is also the union of the luminous aspect of mind and the empty aspect. The luminous quality is the aspect of mind that manifests intelligence, thoughts and sensory experience. The empty quality is the space-like aspect that accommodates all experience. Out of uniting *samppannakrama*, resting in the absolute nature, and *utpattikrama*, skillful means, comes *siddhi*, or powers.

*Through Ashe, the essence of Shambhala—
The place of the seven dharmarajas and the twenty-five rigdens—
May confidence enter our hearts,
And through the power of that may drala and werma
gather like clouds.*

With these lines, Thrangu Rinpoche returns to the Shambhala aspect of the Vidyadhara's legacy. *Ashe* in the Shambhala tradition is a symbol of wakefulness, bravery, and gentleness in the human heart. The dharmarajas were the first seven rulers of the kingdom of Shambhala. The *rigdens*, literally "possessors of noble family," were the subsequent twenty-five rulers of Shambhala.

*Through relying on the blessings and power of the
truth
Of the genuine three jewels and three roots,
May all the excellent fruition of our aspirations
Be spontaneously accomplished, quickly and
effortlessly.*

Here, Thrangu Rinpoche concludes the aspiration chant by invoking the blessings of the "three jewels and the three roots." The three jewels are Buddha, dharma, and sangha. Depending on these three defines one as a Buddhist. The Buddha represents the awakened state in human form. His teachings are the dharma. The sangha, or fellow practitioners, provide feedback and help. The three roots are the vajrayana equivalents of the three jewels. The gurus, provide an up-to-date example of enlightened buddha mind. Like the dharma, the practice of identifying with yidams (deities like Varahi or

Chakrasamvara) is the skillful means for transmitting the enlightened nature. The protectors, like Vetali or Four-Armed Mahakala, are the activity aspect of enlightened mind. Like the sangha, they provide feedback to keep us on the path. The protectors are somewhat different from the sangha in that they represent feedback from the world in general, not just the community of practitioners.

In chanting this aspiration, we have covered a lot of ground. However, there is a lot of ground to cover. Many of the concepts are subtle and require contemplation and study over time. So this explanation, and the chant itself, are just a teaser. Aspiration chants are just that, teasers for difficult and profound teachings.

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.