



Kootenay  
Shambhala  
Meditation  
Centre

## NEWSLETTER • September 2008

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“Accepting impermanence means that we spend less energy resisting reality.”

—SAKYONG MIPHAM RINPOCHE

Contemplation for August 27th, 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 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](http://www.nelsonbuddha.com) or contact us at [info@nelsonbuddha.com](mailto: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, September 14 & 28), 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

#### Centre Director's Message

Hello Community,

Hope everyone feels rejuvenated after a not-so-long summer.

Our summer programs of Weekthün out on the retreat land of Senge Ling in July, and Space, Form & Passion at the centre in August were well attended and reflected the deep sincerity people have to waking up. We are now launching into the fall at KSMC, which feels like an opportunity for a fresh new beginning of practice and study.

While we at KSMC are dedicated to the cultivation of the ancient tradition of Shambhala Buddhism reflected through our core curriculum, we also invite you all to become curious and adventurous in making links to

other wisdom traditions that enhance your understanding of what it means to be a dignified human being. These new offerings are included in the upcoming schedule.

I am excited about the September 4th Community Meeting [described in the Programs area on our website] for members to become engaged in the collective view of what it means to have a commitment to community and how our centre reflects this view. Members and non-members alike are the heart's blood of how we have and maintain a centre in Nelson. New ways and means to participate in the running of the centre will become more accessible this fall.

May we foster a vital and healthy centre for the benefit of others.

Yours in the wisdom of Shambhala,

Lynn Dragone

## New on our website

The Kootenay Shambhala Centre is part of the Pacific Northwest region of the Shambhala global community, which includes Centres and Groups in BC, Alaska, Alberta, Northwest Territories, Oregon and Washington. Our regional community currently hosts one major annual retreat—the Pacific Northwest Winter Retreat, at Camp Pringle on Shawnigan Lake, BC in December and January. And we're working to build on this success.

One of the ways we're collectively doing this is by making information about programs taking place around our region easier to find. One of the ways our Centre in particular is doing this is through the new "Pacific Northwest Shambhala Community" page in the Community area on our website. Check it out, and see what's happening throughout this (very big) corner of Shambhala.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:info@nelsonbuddha.com).

### **SHAMBHALA SCHOOL OF BUDDHIST STUDIES**

#### **The Four Foundations of Mindfulness**

**With Cameron Wenaus**

**Thursdays, September 11 - October 9, 6:30 - 9 pm**

**All welcome • Suggested donation: \$60**

The four foundations of mindfulness—mindfulness of body, feeling, mind and mental events—represent one of the most widely practiced teachings on Buddhist meditation. This five-class, practice-oriented course, recommended for practitioners at all levels, shows the degree of precision that one can bring to meditation practice and the degree of insight that can simultaneously arise.

For more information, go to the Programs area on our website or contact Jim Northcote at [info@nelsonbuddha.com](mailto:info@nelsonbuddha.com).

## **OTHER PROGRAMS/EVENTS**

### **September 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. Typically, senior or intermediate Shambhala Centre members present the teachings in talk-and-discussion format. Upcoming talks are listed below. For the latest schedule information, go to the Clickable Calendar on our website.

#### **Monday, September 1**

No talk is scheduled

#### **Monday, September 8**

Welcome to Shambhala: An Orientation to the Kootenay Shambhala Centre and Shambhala Mandala, with Lynn Dragone

#### **Monday, September 15**

Fearless Buddha, Peaceful Warrior: An Introduction to the Shambhala Buddhist Path, with Jim Northcote

#### **Monday, September 22**

What's the Point? (presenter to be determined)

#### **Monday, September 29**

Hearing, Contemplating and Practicing (presenter to be determined)

### **External, body-based programs at the Shambhala Centre**

"A healthy body and the ability to maintain it demonstrates that we appreciate who we are and what we can do."

—Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

Synchronizing mind and body is at the heart of many spiritual traditions. Body-based practices help us clear blocks to health and vitality and assist us in fully inhabiting our bodies and being present. The benefits carry over into our families and jobs and influence everyone in our communities, subtly and sometimes profoundly.

This fall the Shambhala Centre is hosting three external, weekday programs in three different body-based practices: Kundalini Yoga, Qigong and Feldenkrais for Meditators. We're holding an Open House that will introduce these practices (and provide an opportunity for questions and answers) on Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, from 1 to 3 pm. The programs will start soon afterwards.

Stay tuned for more information.

### **The Sacred Ordinary: Meditation in Everyday Life**

**With Lama Phil Karl**

**Friday, September 26, 7 - 9 pm; Saturday, September 27, 8:30 am - 5:30 pm; and Sunday, September 28, 8:30 am - 12:30 pm**

**All welcome • Suggested donation: \$120**

A stable, awake, cheerful mind is inherent to all human beings. And though a busy life can make that mind seem miles away, meditation and everyday life do not have to

antagonize each other. In fact, life circumstances can become the fuel for your meditation, and your life can cheer you up.

In this weekend program, highly recommended for newcomers and seasoned meditators alike, visiting senior teacher Lama Phil Karl will present meditation techniques for stabilizing the mind and developing insight, as found in the Buddhist tradition. The program will include meditation instruction and practice, lecture and open discussion.

For more information and to register, go to the Programs area on our website or contact Jim Northcote at [info@nelsonbuddha.com](mailto:info@nelsonbuddha.com).

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*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 the Programs area on our website at [www.nelsonbuddha.com](http://www.nelsonbuddha.com).*

## ELSEWHERE IN SHAMBHALA

**Pacific Northwest Winter Dathün**  
**With John Osajima**  
**Camp Pringle, Shawnigan Lake, BC**  
**December 6, 2008 - January 3, 2009**  
**All welcome**  
**Whole dathün: \$1,150 • Discounts available**

Befriend yourself at the fifth annual Pacific Northwest Winter Dathün!

The dathün is a one-month residential meditation retreat, conducted in accordance with practices established at the first retreats led by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche over thirty years ago. The focus is the mindfulness-awareness practices of the Shambhala Buddhist tradition.

This program, designed for both beginning meditators and persons wishing to deepen their practice, will include:

- Group sitting meditation and walking meditation
- Movement exercises
- Private interviews with qualified meditation instructors
- Talks and contemplation
- Short daily work sessions
- Oryoki (meditative-style) meals
- Alternating periods of silence and functional talking

Everyone interested is encouraged to attend the whole dathün; however, anyone is welcome to come for one, two or three weeks.

For more information and to register, go to the Programs area on our website.

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*For information about other programs and events taking place in the wider Shambhala world—or about any other aspect of the community—visit [www.shambhala.org](http://www.shambhala.org).*

## LOOKING CLOSER

### How to *Be* in a Buddhist Shrine Room

By Russell Rodgers

*This column is part of a series meant to help interested people deepen their understanding of the purpose and meaning of Shambhala Buddhist chants and other forms. The other columns 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.*

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Rooms develop different atmospheres and feeling tones depending on what happens in them. A Buddhist shrine room is specially designed to transmit a sense of lineage tradition to those who enter. Practitioners who meditate according to that tradition further enhance the transmission quality of a shrine room by leaving subtle atmospheric traces of what they have been doing.

We want to protect and enhance the transmission qualities of our shrine room; we also want to make it available to others, particularly those who are sensitive to the atmosphere of the room and wish to be in it for that reason. This article is intended to help bring these two aspirations into harmony.

### Mindfulness and Awareness

One thing to note about Buddhist meditation is that it is not directed towards producing bliss, peace, non-thought or clarity. These will happen over time, but to seek them directly means that one is being aggressive with one's mind, trying to push it into a preconceived state, rather than actually getting to know it. Buddhist meditation involves following a simple, grounding meditation technique, using ordinary reference points such as breathing or walking. Practicing this way

naturally settles the mind, allowing one to become more wakeful, alive and aware. As the mind settles, and one learns to be with it in a non-judgmental way, one can develop insight into what the mind actually is. This approach is called mindfulness and awareness.

No matter what discipline you practice in the shrine room, if you approach it with the attitude of non-judgmental mindfulness and awareness, then your activities will be in tune with the rest of the space.

### **Feeling the Space**

One of the ways of appreciating and supporting the atmosphere of a shrine room is simply to be aware of it. So we suggest that people doing classes in the shrine room start out with a few minutes of sitting quietly and just feeling the space.

### **Bowing**

Another way to support the atmosphere of the shrine room is to bow slightly when entering or leaving. This is not particularly a religious gesture—it's just respectfully acknowledging the space and one's own mind at the same time. Bowing is optional, but you may find that it helps your own awareness.

### **Sacredness**

We regard the shrines as sacred, not just ordinary boxes with things on them. Sacredness here has a different meaning than you might suspect. In theistic traditions, something is sacred because it has a relationship with an external deity. In our tradition, the non-theistic tradition of Vajrayana Buddhism, all aspects of experience are said to be sacred, or basically good, fresh and pure in the moment. It's just a matter of relating to experience directly, on the spot, without the unconscious mediation of thoughts and judgments. Even the obscuring thoughts are just the primordial energy of basic mind if one experiences them nakedly, directly, with full, present awareness.

### **Shrines**

Most of the time we do not experience the world as sacred, or primordially good. Shrines are a reminder of that possibility. One cannot experience true sacredness by seeking it directly, but one can evoke the possibility and that makes it easier for it to arise spontaneously with time. Shrines call to mind the lineage that has passed sacred view down to us.

There are many things on the shrine that are meant to evoke the view of primordial goodness. Firstly, there are

the photos of the principle lineage teachers—Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. They are human examples of people who have embodied that view. The central image is the Rigden, which represents the ultimate quality of awakened potential in all of us. There are many types of buddhas in Buddhism, but the Rigden in particular symbolizes the awakened buddha potential in everyday life and human society.

Below the images is a brocade-wrapped text, which symbolizes the teachings about the nature of our minds and how to discover that nature. The crystal ball is a visual symbol of that mind: it is transparent, but it reflects the world around it. The lamp flames represent the special insight that illuminates reality.

In order for shrines to fulfill their function of opening possibilities of sacredness, we treat them with great respect. If we treated them without respect and awareness, they couldn't function. For instance, one wouldn't put things on them or casually lean against them. Since they represent a particular lineage, only certain objects go on them and these objects have fairly precise locations.

The black shrine at the back corner of the shrine room is a shrine for the protector principle. In protector practice, one invites feedback from the world to help one on the path. There is a sense of wrath associated with this particular shrine. However, when one is near any shrine, there is a sense that one should be especially mindful and aware.

### **Cushions**

If you move the cushions to accommodate a particular activity, please put the cushions back as they were when you are finished. The rows are staggered so that meditators have more visual space in front of them. Putting the cushions back helps anyone coming into the space to have an immediate sense of meditation. It is part of keeping the transmission quality of the shrine room alive.

### **Conclusion**

In the Shambhala Buddhist tradition, any activity can have an aspect of meditation if one is aware of one's mind as one is doing it. If your aware mind is fully present and aware of itself and the activity, then that is a kind of meditation. We are happy to share the shrine room with people from disciplines that share that insight, and we think that the experience can be mutually supportive.

## 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](mailto: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 brings 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](mailto:info@nelsonbuddha.com).