



Kootenay
Shambhala
Meditation
Centre

NEWSLETTER • March 2009

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“[In Shambhala,] confidence is *ziji*—
radiance that comes from being both
grounded to earth and reality and also
open to heaven and possibility.”

—ACHARYA ERIC SPIEGEL

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 join us in celebrating 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 - 12 pm

Mondays, 7 - 8 pm

Wednesdays, 12 - 1 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.

Children in Shambhala

Sundays, 9 am - 12 pm

Intended mainly for children of parents participating in our Sunday morning meditation practice, this weekly program offers a playful introduction to Shambhala, with age-appropriate activities to nurture body, mind and heart.

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

On (or near) new and full moon days (this month, March 11 & 25), 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

Key core path program starts March 5th

We're wrapping up our Buddhist Studies school year with "Contemplating Reality," a course you might not want to miss. Highly experienced teachers Russell Rodgers and Duncan Grady will lead participants in a ten-class exploration of fullness-emptiness, a central Shambhala Buddhist topic, on consecutive Thursday evenings, from March 5th to May 7th. Online participation will be possible. For more information see the program listing below or go to the Programs area on our website.

New regular events starting in March

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, we're bringing back our "Children in Shambhala" program on March 1st. It's scheduled to run every Sunday, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

And on March 4th, we're introducing another weekly public meditation practice session, set to take place from 12 to 1 pm on Wednesdays.

For more information about either of these new regular events go to the Programs area on our website or contact Lynn Dragone at 250-352-1964.

Summer meditation retreat details now online

The Kootenay Shambhala Centre heartily invites new and seasoned meditators alike to participate in this year's annual public one-week meditation retreat at Senge Ling, our retreat land near Nelson, from Saturday, June 27th to Sunday, July 5th. In this retreat, titled "Touching the Earth" and led by senior Kootenay Shambhala Centre member Russell Rodgers, we will explore our experience of the natural world in the context of *shunyata*, or empty-fullness. For a full program description go to the Programs area on our website.

New on our website

Our month-old blog (linked in our website's main menu) is filling out with a variety of media. Highlights include a YouTube video featuring Kootenay Shambhala Centre member Cameron Wenaus talking about Shambhala information technology initiatives, and a

Pacific Northwest Winter Retreat Photo Gallery. If you'd like to contribute something, send it to Jim Northcote at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

GENEROSITY POLICY

Our Generosity Policy allows anyone 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 Tim Albert, our Meditation Instruction Coordinator, at 250-357-2497 or eldoradocreek@netidea.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.

SHAMBHALA SCHOOL OF BUDDHIST STUDIES Contemplating Reality

With Russell Rodgers & Duncan Grady
Thursdays, March 5 - May 7, 6:30 - 9 pm
All welcome • Online participation possible
Suggested donation: \$100

Often in our lives, we feel slightly out of synch with our social and physical reality. Is it possible that this reality is not what we think it is?

Over thousands of years Buddhist meditators have explored their minds and perceptions. These explorations have led to the central theme in Mahayana Buddhism of fullness-emptiness. Historically, different schools arose in succession, each with a view and meditative experience deeper and subtler than the previous one.

In this ten-class Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies course (a.k.a. Emptiness) we will use readings—mainly from the book *Contemplating Reality: A Practitioner's Guide to the View in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, by Andy Karr—and discussion to explore our conceptual understanding of ourselves and our world. We will deepen that understanding with meditative contemplations and explorations to bring the ideas into the realm of personal experience.

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

SHAMBHALA TRAINING

Level II: Birth of the Warrior

With Eric Watson

Friday, March 20, 7 - 9:30 pm; and Saturday &

Sunday, March 21 & 22, 8:30 am - 6 pm

Prerequisite: Shambhala Training Level I

Suggested donation: \$120; \$40 for repeat participants

In this program, the second in the sequence of Shambhala Training workshops, we cultivate our willingness to observe our cocoon of habitual fear and defense mechanisms. We begin to appreciate that there is no fundamental obstacle to experiencing basic goodness.

For more information go to the Programs area on our website or contact Sally Albert at 250-357-2497 or eldoradocreek@netidea.com.

OTHER PROGRAMS/EVENTS

March 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, March 2

AUDIO: "Going to the Places that Scare You," with Pema Chödrön (followed by a discussion led by Margaret McKeown)

Monday, March 9

VIDEO: "Meditation Is Like Drinking Water," with Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche (followed by a discussion led by Jill Kelly)

Monday, March 16

VIDEO: "Cultivating Sensitivity to Our World," by Andy Goldsworthy (followed by a discussion led by Lynn Dragone and Gregory Heming)

Monday, March 23

"Aloneness and Loneliness" Presenter TBA

Monday, March 30

"The Use of Doubt," with Lynn Dragone and Brian McEwen

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.

ELSEWHERE IN SHAMBHALA

Sangha Retreat

**With Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche & Acharyas
Pema Chödrön & Adam Lobel
Shambhala Mountain Center, Red Feather Lakes,
Colorado
July 17 - 24, 2009**

This retreat provides an opportunity for the Shambhala community to gather, practice and connect with Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, and Acharyas Pema Chödrön and Adam Lobel. The retreat will focus on the sitting practice of meditation and include talks, guided meditation, contemplation practice, and shamatha yoga. Open to members of Shambhala, this week will count as one week of a dathün. For more information visit Shambhala Mountain Center's website at www.shambhalamountain.org.

For information about programs and events taking place in the wider Shambhala world—or about any other aspect of the community—please visit Shambhala's main website at www.shambhala.org.

LOOKING CLOSER

Commentary on Namkha Drimed Rabjam Rinpoche's Supplication for the Longevity of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

By Russell Rodgers

RUSSELL RODGERS has been a student of Buddhism for 34 years and has taught at the Kootenay Shambhala Centre for most of that time. He is the author of Essays on the Shambhala Buddhist Chants, which is available as a PDF file at: nelson.shambhala.org/documents/EssaysOnShambhalaBuddhistChants.pdf His essays written for this newsletter are available on the "About Our Newsletter" page on our website.

As with other longevity chants, this one is all about the power of devotion. For genuine gurus, it is the devotion of their students that prolongs their life. Because they are bodhisattvas, they exist to serve, and since they don't have ordinary ego-based survival instincts, their lives could be short.

Longevity supplications are also a way to stimulate a continuing awareness of the guru principle in general. The "outer" guru is the one we see and study with. Because we initially find it easier to recognize enlightened mind in someone else, the outer guru's example makes it easier to later recognize the "inner" guru in ourselves. What we are talking about here is a spacious, warm, awake and aware quality that normally exists unnoticed in the background of our daily experience. It is this quality that devotion to the outer guru gradually helps to bring to the foreground of our awareness as we travel on the path.

Longevity chants can often seem "over the top" with superlatives about the guru. This one is no exception. We praise the guru's limitless good qualities, and ask him to stay around teaching us for eons. We aspire for him to accomplish unbounded buddha activity. There is a reason for this limitless quality. Essentially, what we are talking about is buddha-nature—our own and the guru's. Buddha-nature is connected with emptiness, which includes emptiness of limits. Individual appearances that come into our awareness are temporary and dependent on conditions, but the mind itself is like a vast emptiness from which anything can arise. Buddha-nature is connected with the intelligent, awake and aware quality of mind at that level. So what we are praising is buddha-nature's limitless potential, first in the guru and by implication in ourselves and other sentient beings.

The chant opens with the words “OM SVASTI.” *Svasti* could be translated as “good,” or “auspicious” or “wonderful.” So the opening could mean something like “Ah, wonderful.” The next lines invoke the blessings of *deathless Amitāyus*. Amitāyus is the buddha of the western pure land, Sukhāvātī. Prior to becoming a buddha, Amitāyus is said to have vowed to create an ideal place for practice and awakening, one that could be easily reached by ordinary people through the power of aspiration. He is connected with the padma energy of warmth and compassion. Amitāyus is frequently called on in the context of longevity practices or when we make aspirations for a recently deceased person to be reborn in his pure land.

The following lines in the chant praise the Sakyong’s role as a lineage holder of three great teaching streams: that of Padmasambhava, Mipham the Great, and the Shambhala lineage. The first line in the body of the chant invokes power of the truth of *the long-life vidyādhara Padmākara, his consort, and so forth*. Padmākara is another name for Padmasambhava, who was instrumental in establishing Buddhism in Tibet. Tibetans revere this eighth century master as the ultimate rinpoche, or “Guru Rinpoche.” Padmasambhava had several consorts, so it’s not clear which one is being called upon here. We can guess that it might be Yeshe Tsogyal, the best known to us. Besides invoking Padmasambhava’s blessings and those of his consort, the chant also invokes the blessings of the assembly of *those who have attained deathlessness*. Attaining deathlessness is one of the four attainments of a yogin who reaches the level of *vidyādhara*. Deathlessness could be understood literally— that Padmasambhava and the vidyādhara are still alive, just not visible to ordinary people. Or, it could be understood in the sense that the essence of their minds, like space, cannot be destroyed.

The following lines contain some traditional Tibetan word play. The Tibetan writer of a longevity supplication, in this case the Sakyong’s father-in-law, Namkha Drimed Rabjam Rinpoche, will often find a way to incorporate a word whose meaning somehow connects back to the name of the person we are supplicating to live a long life. In this case, the words with double meanings are italicized. “Ruler of the three *worlds*, *protector* who guards our well-being....” The three worlds could refer to realms above, on and below the surface of the earth, or the phrase could refer to the realm that we occupy, plus the form and formless god realms. In any case, the italicized words “*worlds*, *protector*” relate to the title “Sakyong.” *Sa* means “world” or “earth”, and *kyong* means “protector.”

The next lines refer to the Sakyong as *dharma king, heir of the Rigden kings*. He is responsible for propagating the buddhist dharma, and also the Shambhala tradition of secular enlightenment. The term *rigden* means “holder of the family.” It can refer to a cosmic principle of wakefulness that exists as a potential to manifest in human society. It can also refer specifically to the 25 enlightened kings who are said to rule in succession in the legendary kingdom of Shambhala.

The chant further praises the Sakyong as *the compassionate display of the three secrets....* The *three secrets* refer to vajra body, vajra speech and vajra mind. Vajra body refers to the world of forms. Vajra speech is the sense of communication beyond the words. Vajra mind is the empty but wakeful and aware mind. They are “secret” because they are not apparent to conventional mind. *Vajra* means “indestructible.” The indestructible quality is the empty aspect. Emptiness cannot be destroyed, just as space cannot be destroyed. One could also relate these to basic goodness: at a certain level of nowness, all projections drop away and anything that happens has a quality of self existing, primordial goodness, beyond conventional designations of good and bad.

Further word play happens with the lines that characterize the Sakyong as the manifestation “of lord *Mipham* who was Manjushri in person....” The word *Mipham* is italicized because the chant’s author has cited the Sakyong’s previous incarnation, Mipham the Great, while at the same time managing to include another reference to the Sakyong’s own name, Sakyong *Mipham* Rinpoche. The historical Mipham referred to here lived from 1846 to 1912. That Mipham was famous for his scholarship and tremendous written output. Therefore he is identified with Manjushri, a deity who symbolizes enlightened intelligence and knowledge.

The next line refers to the Sakyong as a subjugator of *maras*. Maras are seductive forces or tendencies that tend to degrade us. There are four of these: denial of impermanence and death, belief in a self, the wish to ignore suffering and dwell exclusively in pleasure, and attraction to emotional upheavals (kleshas). With respect to the latter, even though we dislike emotional upheavals, we still engage in them again and again. That engagement reinforces a familiar and perversely comforting sense of self-against-the-world.

Friend who raises the victory banner of the teachings of the great secret, lord messenger of Padma, may you ever remain.” The *great secret* refers to the vajrayana teachings. They are secret in an outer sense because key aspects of these teachings are only available through a qualified teacher to a qualified student. They are secret in an inner sense

because you have to be ready in order to understand them. He is called the *lord messenger of Padma*, meaning that the Sakyong brings the tradition of Padmasambhava into this world.

In the final four lines we acknowledge the limitless possibilities of buddha-nature and aspire that the Sakyong continue to embody these. *May your three secrets be indestructible like a vajra...* His three secrets are his vajra body, speech and mind. *May your lotus feet stand firm for oceans of kalpas....* We also ask that he live a very long time, in fact for *oceans of kalpas*. *Kalpas* could be translated as "eons." *May your vast buddha activity spread throughout the whole world...* We aspire that his vast buddha activity spread auspicious benefit and happiness throughout the whole world. *And may the splendor of auspicious benefit and happiness blaze throughout Jambudvipa.* Jambudvipa is the ancient Indian term for the land that human beings inhabit.

Legend has it that when the Buddha was nearing the end of his life, his disciples missed the appropriate time to ask him to prolong his life. Only later, when he was actually dying, did they remember to ask him. However, at that time Buddha told them that their motivation was not pure enough—they just wanted to avoid losing his company. If he acceded to their request it would be bad for the sangha in the future. In this supplication we are trying not to repeat that mistake.

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 the Kootenay Shambhala Blog or one or both of our email lists, or contact Lynn Dragone, Cameron Wenaus 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 brings several privileges. For more information please go to the Membership page on our website or contact Cameron Wenaus, our Membership Coordinator, at info@nelsonbuddha.com.