



**KOOTENAY
SHAMBHALA
MEDITATION
CENTRE**

NEWSLETTER • December 2006

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*Fundamentally the word Shambhala means
"peace."*

—SAKYONG MIPHAM RINPOCHE
2006 Harvest of Peace address

About Us

Established in 1976, the Kootenay Shambhala Meditation Centre is part of an international community of some 170 meditation centres and groups founded by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and now led by his son and spiritual heir, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. At the heart of the community are the Shambhala Buddhist teachings, a unique expression of the wisdom of the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages of Tibetan Buddhism and the Shambhala tradition of living an uplifted life, fully engaged with the world.

Our core offerings include free mindfulness-awareness meditation instruction and a curriculum of Shambhala, Buddhist and contemplative arts training. The thread that runs through all we do is the aspiration to relieve suffering by awakening the world to its own potential.

We invite everyone to participate in this journey of discovery.

Regular Public Events

These events are open to anyone, free of charge or by donation. For the latest information see our events calendar at www.nelsonbuddha.com or email us at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

Open House

Mondays, 7-9:30pm

Our Open House program introduces participants to Shambhala Buddhist practice, teachings and culture.

• **7pm:** Meditation practice (introductory meditation instruction is available at 7pm, further instruction at 7:30pm) • **8pm:** Talk and discussion • **9pm:** Tea

Meditation Practice

Tuesdays, 6:30-7:30am; Thursdays, 5:15-6:15pm;

Fridays, 6:30-7:30am; and Sundays, 9am-noon

These sessions emphasize the Shambhala community's central practice—mindfulness-awareness meditation—in both sitting and walking forms. Sessions start and end with chants. Participants are welcome to come and go as they choose.

Café Shambhala

First Sunday of the month, 9am-noon

A variation of the usual Sunday session format, Café Shambhala includes group meditation instruction at 9am, a couple of short talks, and a break for refreshments, relaxed discussion and getting acquainted.

Children in Shambhala

(Cancelled for December and January)

With storytelling, games and refreshments, this program offers a fun introduction to the Shambhala world. It is meant for children whose parents are developing their own meditation practice.

Sadhana of Mahamudra

New and full moon days, 7-8pm

The Sadhana of Mahamudra, a text written by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, embodies a way of cutting through all forms of dogmatism. The practice involves chanting the text and relaxing into the atmosphere that doing so creates.

ANNOUNCING: Two New Regular Public Events

Mark your datebooks, set your alarm clocks and get out your woolies! The Shambhala Centre is now offering, on a trial basis through December, two additional weekly meditation practice sessions: Tuesdays and Fridays, 6:30-7:30am (described above). Join us, brave practitioners, for these early morning wake-ups.

Upcoming Core Curriculum Programs

The Shambhala community's core education curriculum comprises three elements: Shambhala Training, Buddhist studies, and training in Shambhala Art. People may engage the curriculum to the degree they want. Curriculum programs altogether offer students the preparation they require to receive subtler training.

Shambhala Training Level II: Birth of the Warrior

With Ginny Evans and Sally Albert

Friday, December 1, 7-9:30pm; Saturday & Sunday, December 2 & 3, 8:30am-6pm

Prerequisite: Level I • Suggested donation: \$120

The point of the Shambhala Training is to get out of the cocoon, which is the shyness and aggression in which we have wrapped ourselves. —CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE

In Level II we cultivate the willingness to observe our cocoon of habitual fear and defence mechanisms. To pre-register or for more information contact Sally Albert or Gala Sly at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies "Journey Without Goal"

A Six-Class Introduction to Tantra

With Russell Rodgers and Sally Albert

Thursdays, January 4 - February 8, 6:30-8pm

Open to anyone • Online participation possible • Suggested donation: \$60 (materials not included)

Since September, we've been trying a new way of running Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies (SSBS) weeknight courses. We're holding a class every Thursday evening, offering courses back to back. And we're structuring the classes in a way we hope makes them both beneficial and enjoyable.

The classes, though open to anyone, ask more of participants than our Open House program does: teachings are more in-depth, and students are expected to complete each course they start, do the readings and contemplate the homework questions.

We hope this approach will enable interested students to complete the nine courses in the SSBS curriculum in a timely and pleasant way.

Another thing we've been doing for a few months is using the Internet to reach people who can't attend

classes at the Centre. Course audio files and handouts are being made available to registrants on a password-secured page on the Centre's website. Whether one participates at the Centre, online, or in some combination of these two options, the suggested donation is the same.

The "Journey Without Goal" course introduces the principles of tantra, or fruition practice. The readings are drawn mainly from the book *Journey Without Goal*, compiled from a series of lectures Chögyam Trungpa gave at the Naropa Institute in 1974. These teachings provide a direct and experiential picture of the teacher-student relationship, devotion and empowerment, mandala principle, visualization and formless meditation, and the fruition qualities of the five wisdom energies.

Pre-registration is requested. To pre-register and order a copy of the book (available for about \$27; allowing three weeks for delivery is recommended), or for more information, contact Jim Northcote at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

Shambhala Training Level III: Warrior in the World

With Eric Watson and Sally Albert

Friday, January 19, 7-9:30pm; Saturday & Sunday, January 20 & 21, 8:30am-6pm

Prerequisite: Level II • Suggested donation: \$120

In this program we focus on developing the bravery to step outside our cocoons. To pre-register or for more information contact Sally Albert or Gala Sly at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies "Lojong: Training the Mind (for Everyday Life)"

(Facilitator to be announced)

Thursdays, February 22 - March 29, 6:30-8pm (to be confirmed)

Open to anyone • Online participation possible • Suggested donation: \$60 (materials not included)

Lojong (literally, "mind training") cultivates realization in emptiness and compassion, the essential qualities of the bodhisattva warrior. This practice-oriented course explores the mahayana slogans of Atisha, a 10th century Indian Buddhist master, whose teachings left a deep imprint on all Tibetan lineages. The contemplative practice of exchanging self for other—*tonglen*—is emphasized in conjunction with the day-to-day application of the slogans.

The course readings are from the books *The Great Path of Awakening*, by Jamgön Kongtrül, *Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving Kindness*, by Chögyam Trungpa and *Tonglen: The Path of Transformation*, by Pema Chödrön.

Pre-registration is requested. To pre-register and order the books (allowing three weeks for delivery is recommended), or for more information, contact Jim Northcote at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

Shambhala Art: Awakening The Sacred *Cultivating cool minds, clear perception, pure expression in everyday life*

The creative process often seems mysterious and magical. How do we give a physical reality to some ephemeral inspiration and in turn communicate its essential nature beyond the limits of its container? The Shambhala Art program's purpose is to explore the creative process and the product we call art from the viewpoint of meditative discipline. This program does not teach a particular skill or technique such as painting, sculpture or dance. It is about the source of inspiration and how what is created speaks to us. Once a view and a path are awakened they can be put into practice within any artistic discipline.

Shambhala Art is based on the Dharma Art teachings of the late Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. The international Shambhala Art program is a division of Shambhala International and taught by trained and authorized Shambhala Art teachers.

Art has been used for millennia to evoke, or reveal truth, genuineness, and a sense of the sacred. That is what "awakening the sacred" means. Although the Shambhala Art teachings are inspired by Shambhala Buddhism, they are not in any way religious or about adopting a religion. They are about discovery and play, and the universal nature of the creative process and what the result communicates.

Part One: Coming To Your Senses
With Lynn Frederick and Petra Youngberg
Friday, February 23 and Saturday, February 24 (times to be announced)
Open to anyone • Suggested donation: to be announced

Art has more to do with perception than talent. The creative process requires that we first perceive our world as it is before we can represent it in art form or use it as a launching pad for expression. Part One is the exploration of the nature of our perceptions and what influences them.

To pre-register or for more information contact Lynn Frederick at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

Part Two: Signs and Symbols
With Lynn Frederick and Petra Youngberg
Friday, March 9 and Saturday, March 10 (times to be announced)
Prerequisite: Part One • Suggested donation: to be announced

What do we perceive? Is it our thoughts about things or the things themselves? In Part Two we discover that our perception of art, if not also everyday life, is inextricably linked to our realization of signs and symbols. Exploration of thought sense and felt sense of things, including us.

To pre-register or for more information contact Lynn Frederick at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

Shambhala Training Level IV: Awakened Heart

(Director to be announced)
Friday, April 13, 7-9:30pm; and Saturday & Sunday, April 14 & 15, 8:30am-6pm (tentative)
Prerequisite: Level III • Suggested donation: \$120

The focus of this program is on opening to increased awareness and inquisitiveness about the world, as it is. To pre-register or for more information contact Sally Albert or Gala Sly at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

Other Upcoming Programs & Events

Open House Series: "Fearless Buddha, Peaceful Warrior"
A Four-Part Introduction to Shambhala Buddhism
With Margaret McKeown and Jim Northcote
Mondays, January 8 - 29, 8pm
Open to anyone, free of charge or by donation

Elsewhere in Shambhala

Pacific Northwest Winter Dathün
With Acharya Eve Rosenthal and Ben Hines
Shawnigan Lake, BC • December 9 - January 6
\$1,045, or \$345 per week; discounts are available

This *dathün* ("month session") is a month-long meditation retreat open to anyone. To register or for

more information visit
www.nelsonbuddha.com/dathun .

A message from the coordinators:

If you are planning to attend some or all of the retreat but have not yet registered, we need to know as soon as possible that you are coming. If you are hoping to attend, but have some details to clear up, please contact our registrar, Ty Runkle, at tyrunkle@telus.net or (604) 520-7611 to let him know.

Full dathün: December 9, 2006 - January 6, 2007
Weekthüins: beginning and ending on each Saturday
Ngöndro and Werma Practice Intensive: December 16 - 30; may be attended for one or two weeks; fulfills the Primordial Rigden Ngöndro and Werma group practice requirements.

Refuge vow ceremony: December 24, with Acharya Eve Rosenthal. You need not be a participant in the retreat to take the vow. If you are planning to come only for the refuge vow, contact Ty Runkle at tyrunkle@telus.net .

Other Programs & Events

The Kootenay Shambhala Centre continually receives information about programs and events taking place in the wider Shambhala world (as well as other helpful resource materials). To keep abreast of this info, see the "Further Resources" binder in the community room at the Centre.

Column

The Protector Ritual

By Russell Rodgers

RUSSELL RODGERS is a senior member of the KSMC. He has been practicing and studying Shambhala Buddhism for about 30 years.

The protector chants have been causing controversy at the Centre since Trungpa Rinpoche first asked us to start doing them almost 30 years ago. Periodically, members argue over whether or not it's appropriate to expose new people to them, perhaps fearing that the bloody imagery will frighten them off or that new people will resent that they're being asked to take on the religious baggage of Tibetan culture. Our own culture's religious baggage seems to have reached dangerous proportions, and it's certainly understandable that people would be sensitive.

There is no denying that there's a steep learning curve connected with the protector chants. My own feeling, having done them for 30 years, is of more and more appreciation for why Trungpa Rinpoche asked us to do them. I'd like to share some of my perceptions about the nature of these rituals, and, in future columns, the specific contents of each chant. In this column, I'd like to say a few words about how we use of ritual in general to make our somewhat rigid realities more pliable.

When we perceive something, the first impression coming in from the senses is mere sound, mere sensation, or mere appearance. By "mere" we mean unadorned, nothing added. Sometimes in sitting practice we might have the very simple perception of our body as an outline in space. An itch might be mere sensation, not good or bad. To these first impressions we unconsciously add associations and names. Looking at the wall in front of us, we name it a "wall." From past memories, we think it's solid, so we don't try to walk through it. We know it as a specific type of wall—drywall, brick, wood—and each category has countless more associations that are added to the mere image that our eyes perceived. On top of all that are our feelings of "like" or "dislike" for the appearance of the wall. All of this is unconscious. If we saw the wall as mere image, it would be like the image on a television screen or in a dream when you recognize that you're dreaming: just an image that doesn't dictate a particular way of behaving towards it. In a dream, you could walk through the wall if you wanted.

The result of this way of perceiving is that our world is rigid and stale. We're living in a world of past memories, learned associations and concepts about things, rather than directly contacting reality. In fact, some experiments have shown that if a person doesn't have concepts or associations for something, s/he won't actually see it. There is, for instance, the story of people living in the jungle, who don't have a concept of "airplane," and so they don't actually see the airplanes that regularly fly over their homeland. A major effect of our projections is that the world loses its fluidity and self-existing magic. We become prisoners of our own habits, and our world becomes stale and closes in on us.

Ritual functions as a way of moving our frozen projections around and making the world more malleable. We do rituals all the time, unconsciously. When we brush our teeth in the morning, is it actually the case that removing a thin layer of film from insensitive bone really prepares us for the day? We brush our hair, shave, put on deodorant and then we think about our morning coffee. Even saying the word "coffee" has an effect on us. Our choice of clothes determines how we will go through the day, and how others will respond and thus reinforce our intention.

When we shake hands or say “hello” or “how are you,” our mind rides out on the gesture or the expression and meets the mind of the other person. Our world expands a bit to allow the other person in or at least relieve social tension. There are countless rituals connected with money, politeness, food, flirtation, who to make eye contact with on the street and so on. We continually use unconscious ritual to navigate our habitual world and make adjustments to it.

Conscious ritual, ritual that we’re aware of as we do it, has a further effect: it opens up the boundaries beyond the limits of the ritual. It becomes more than just making ourselves comfortable with the other person. Our awareness travels in the direction prescribed by the ritual, but its destination is wide open. When we’re aware of limits, we transcend them because we’re aware of the open space around those limits. Buddhists call this state of mind “emptiness.” It is empty of projection or distortion. If you’re completely there with your awareness when you shake hands, you’re wide open, and anything could happen. Your connection to the other person could take you to Vienna, or Singapore.

In order to be effective, Buddhist ritual should be done very consciously, with present awareness of all the parts of the ritual, and also awareness of the limits of the ritual itself. We know that the ritual or chant is a mental fabrication, our imagination, but we let it direct our awareness beyond the limits of habit into open space.

Rituals such as the protector chants take us beyond what we can do in simple sitting practice. In sitting, we as beginners usually only recognize the grosser, more obvious thoughts. The subtle associations and projections with which we fasten down our world are harder to spot and let go of. Vajrayana rituals like the protector chants point us back to the underlying fluidity, magic and sacredness of primordial existence.

The protectors, specifically, are connected with the *karma* principle. Karma means “action,” the continual change and flux, the active principle of reality. This active principle is threatening to habitual pattern. It’s connected with impermanence and groundlessness. When we try to fight the karma principle by stopping change, we experience change as the pain of losing ground. Karma also refers to karmic consequences: when you push something, it creates ripples of cause and effect. These could be positive from the point of view of our path, or negative. The more awake we are to change, the more even seemingly negative situations just become part of our path.

In order to create a ritual to evoke the karma principle, we need to have images to work with. The images in this case are uncompromising and blunt, like reality itself. The main figures are surrounded by flames, symbolizing tremendous energy and wrathful compassion. This compassion burns away projections that will ultimately cause us alienation and suffering. They wear garlands of human heads that represent the different kinds of thoughts and emotions that are self-liberated as soon as we recognize them. In some sense the protectors are more real than our habitual, projected world. They’re more real because they represent reality itself.

The ritual of the protector chants points our awareness to more and more subtle signals from the world. We become super-sensitive to karmic cause and effect and constant flux. We enhance this sensitivity by becoming very aware of the psychological atmosphere as we do the chant.

The *Vetali* chant refers to Vetali as our mother, sister and maid. At first, we don’t understand her, and the karmic feedback from the world seems capricious. Later, we appreciate her as a sister. At this stage we are tuned into the kind of action and consequences that she symbolizes and represents. Finally, she acts as a maid. There’s no separation from the flux of the universe. We’re one with it, we appreciate it. It works for us. We can use it for enlightened action.

Reviews

If you’ve recently come across any mind-stopping, heart-opening or otherwise noteworthy art, music, books, blogs or suchlike, you can tell others about your discoveries here. Email your short (under 150 words), snappy reviews to the KSMC Newsletter at info@nelsonbuddha.com.

The Chronicles Project

Chronicles of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

www.chronicleproject.com

Reviewed by Russell Rodgers

The Chronicles Project is an online source of stories and interviews about the life and legacy of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, the founder of Shambhala Buddhism. Click on “Stories” and you’ll get students’ anecdotes of how this most mischievous and outrageous teacher interacted with his students. Click on “Interviews” and you’ll hear how other Tibetan Rinpoches and leaders in our sangha are personally working with his legacy. The stories are not only edifying but also enjoyable.

Community

The Shambhala Centre is home to a community of people who share a connection to mindfulness-awareness practice and the aspiration to realize a more wakeful, saner society. There are many ways to get involved—attending programs and celebrations, working with a meditation instructor, joining in recreational activities and helping out at the Centre, to name a few. Everyone's participation is invited and appreciated.

You can stay in the loop about what's on at the Centre by visiting our events calendar at www.nelsonbuddha.com and/or by subscribing to one or both of our email lists. If you subscribe to the *Newsletter* list, we'll send you our monthly newsletter and little else. If you subscribe to our *Active Friends* list, you'll get the newsletter plus reminders about upcoming programs and events and a small assortment of community-related messages. To join either list—or for more information about any aspect of Shambhala—email us at info@nelsonbuddha.com.