



Kootenay  
Shambhala  
Meditation  
Centre

**NEWSLETTER • April 2008**

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"The whole point of the *Sadhana of Mahamudra* is to dissolve the distinction between self and other."

—ACHARYA ALLYN LYON

Sadhana of Mahamudra weekend  
Kootenay Shambhala Centre  
Spring 2004

## 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 join us in 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

These events are open to anyone, 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, April 20),  
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

### What's the "Sadhana of Mahamudra"?

If you're new to our Centre—and even if you've been participating for years—you may be wondering: what on earth is the Sadhana of Mahamudra about?! Well, starting on April 24<sup>th</sup>, you'll have a great opportunity to find out. Senior Kootenay Shambhala Centre member Russell Rodgers is scheduled to teach a Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies course on this seminal text and practice on six consecutive Thursday evenings, through May 29<sup>th</sup> (to learn more see the program listing below). Please come with your questions!

### Upcoming contemplative arts workshops

Halifax-based senior teacher Coleen Logan is coming to Nelson in late April to teach two Shambhala Training weekend programs at our Centre. We hope that while she's here she will also lead a couple of contemplative arts workshops—one on calligraphy and one on ikebana (flower arranging). Stay tuned for details.

### Summer meditation retreat dates confirmed

We're delighted to announce that Shelley Pierce, a senior Shambhala teacher now living in Bellingham, WA, has agreed to lead our annual public weeklong meditation retreat, at our retreat land near Nelson, from Saturday, July 5<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, July 13<sup>th</sup>. The program's theme is joining earth, energy and space. More info will be available soon.

### New on our website

We recently added a password-protected "Members Area" to our website. This feature allows us to make a range of potentially helpful administrative and other resources easily accessible to all Centre members and reduce our reliance on individual members' computers. Members Area resources currently include, for example, an up-to-date "Members Contact Information" list and a meeting minutes archive. For the required login info, contact Jim Northcote at [info@nelsonbuddha.com](mailto:info@nelsonbuddha.com).

## GENEROSITY POLICY

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

For more information, go to the Meditation area of 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 largely 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 invite everyone to explore any of these offerings to the degree they want. 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.

#### SHAMBHALA TRAINING

##### **Drala**

**With Coleen Logan**

**Friday, April 18, 7 - 9:30 pm; and Saturday & Sunday, April 19 & 20, 8:30 am - 6 pm**

Prerequisite: Windhorse

Suggested donation: \$120 • Materials fee: \$34

Through exploring the depth of perception, one engages the elemental and magical strength inherent in the world. This program presents the principle of drala, the sacred energy and power that exists when we step beyond aggression. For more information, go to the Programs area of our website or contact Sally Albert at [info@nelsonbuddha.com](mailto:info@nelsonbuddha.com).

#### SHAMBHALA SCHOOL OF BUDDHIST STUDIES

##### **Sadhana or Mahamudra**

**With Russell Rodgers**

**Thursdays, April 24 - May 29, 6:30 - 9 pm**

Open to anyone • Suggested donation: \$60

Online participation possible

The *Sadhana of Mahamudra* is a short liturgy practiced by the Shambhala community on the new and full moon days of the lunar calendar. It was written by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche while he was on retreat in Bhutan in 1968. This retreat marked a profound turning point in his presentation of the buddhadharma in the West. The text expresses the importance of an uncorrupted lineage and the subtle teachings on awareness involved in the mahamudra and maha ati practices. When one chants the liturgy, one senses that it embodies the truth on a profound level, but it is beyond comprehension in any conventional way.

In this six-class course we will explore the meaning of the Sadhana, and also of vajrayana, the highest teachings

of Buddhism. The course readings will be available as a package to course pre-registrants for \$25.

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

#### SHAMBHALA TRAINING

##### **Level III: Warrior in the World**

**With Coleen Logan**

**Friday, May 2, 7 - 9:30 pm; and Saturday & Sunday, May 3 & 4, 8:30 am - 6 pm**

Prerequisite: Level II • Suggested donation: \$120

Developing fearlessness by examining our habitual tendencies, we are willing to experience our life without relying on the cocoon. We begin to engage the world directly and extend the attitude of fearlessness to our activities. For more information about the program, go to the Programs area of our website or contact Sally Albert at [info@nelsonbuddha.com](mailto:info@nelsonbuddha.com).

### OTHER PROGRAMS/EVENTS

#### **Parinirvana Day Celebration**

**Saturday, April 5, 4 - 8 pm**

Everyone is welcome

All Shambhala members and friends are invited to this special practice session. We will honour the Parinirvana (birth, enlightenment and death) of the worldwide Shambhala community's founder, the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, who died on April 4, 1987.

We will celebrate his brilliance, and our own good fortune to have encountered it in this lifetime, by practicing together the Sadhana of Mahamudra with Feast. This vajrayana practice text is the only one written by him that he gave to *all* of his students to practice, without reservation. The Parinirvana Day celebration is the one time of the year when we are permitted to extend the Sadhana of Mahamudra Feast practice to the entire Shambhala sangha.

During the practice we will view a short video featuring Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche teaching. As well, there will be time for a few readings from the vast stores of his teachings and poetry.

The actual feast meal will be an organized potluck. Please call Margaret, at 250-352-6559, to arrange to bring a dish. It can be quite simple, or elaborate, as you will.

All who have been touched by Chögyam Trungpa's vast compassionate mind, that is, all who have a connection to the Shambhala Centre, are welcome.

### April Open House Talks Mondays, 8 - 9 pm

Open to anyone, free of charge (donations gratefully accepted)

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

April 7  
**Clarity Day to Day**  
With Candace Batycki

April 14  
No talk is scheduled

April 21  
**Alone Together: Loneliness and the Path**  
With Robin Higgins

April 28  
No talk is scheduled

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*This newsletter describes only some of what's happening at our Centre. For the most complete and up-to-date listing of the Centre's programs and events, visit our website at [www.nelsonbuddha.com](http://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](http://www.shambhala.org).*

## LOOKING CLOSER

### Commentary on the Seven-Line Supplication to Padmakara

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.*

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HUM

*In the northwest of the land of Uddiyana,  
On a blooming lotus flower,  
You have attained supreme, wondrous siddhi.  
You are renowned as Padmakara,  
Surrounded by your retinue of many dakinis.  
We practice following your example.  
Please approach and grant your blessing.  
GURU-PADMA-SIDDHI HUM*

The Seven-Line Supplication is a famous prayer to Padmasambhava, a powerful yogi renowned in Tibet as the "Second Buddha." Padmasambhava's exact dates are unclear, but it seems that he lived in the eighth or ninth centuries AD. His birth had been prophesied over a thousand years earlier by Buddha Shakyamuni. Padmasambhava was born in Uddiyana, which at the time was a prosperous kingdom in a fertile river valley near the border of what is now Pakistan and Afghanistan. The valley was a thriving Buddhist society on the trade route between India and Persia. It is possible that Osama Bin Laden hides nearby now.

*On a blooming lotus flower,  
You have attained supreme, wondrous siddhi.*

These lines have a literal meaning and some symbolic meanings as well. Literally, the legend of Padmasambhava's birth says that he was not born of a mother and a father but instead spontaneously appeared on a giant lotus flower in the middle of a lake. Therefore the names Padmasambhava and Padmakara contain the word *padma*, which means "lotus flower."

The symbolic meaning of these lines derives from the fact that lotus flowers grow out of the mud on a lake bottom, but are themselves immaculate and unstained. According to the legend, Padmasambhava was one of those rare individuals who arrive in this world unstained by previous karma, in full realization of the

nature of their minds and being. In other words, they are fully enlightened. Such persons may appear to need to tread on a path, but that is only to demonstrate for others that a path exists, and perhaps, to learn some skillful means to ripen others.

Another level of symbolism evoked by this image has to do with the path of *dzogchen*—the "Great Perfection"—the highest of all the Buddhist practice vehicles. At this level, one is presented with the view of a fully enlightened person, and asked to step directly into that view. In contrast, the lower level teachings speak to our more predominate and immediate concerns as a way starting us along the path. These concerns might include anxiety, fear of impermanence, the need for compassion in our lives, or simply the desire for some clarity and mental peace.

From the Great Perfection point of view, our own enlightened, fully awake mind is already within us. It is not only awake, but it manifests as everything that we experience. Even though it is in us and all around us, we do not recognize it. This mind also has the possibility of obscuring itself with ignorance and solidified thoughts and concepts. Like Padmasambhava, this isn't born from external causes—it doesn't have a father or mother. Meditative practice doesn't produce this mind; it only uncovers it. Even as we meditate, that enlightened mind is what manifests as the self that meditates, the objects of meditation and the obscuring thoughts. It produces the seeming mud of samsara, but is itself immaculate.

This style of introducing very profound teachings at the beginning of the journey should be familiar to those who have done Shambhala Training. In Level I, we are introduced to the notion of "basic goodness." Basic goodness means that within a state of perfect oneness, before ordinary thoughts of good or bad have arisen, everything that arises is pure and unstained by thoughts or projections. Everything is primordially and basically *good*. It is "good" beyond ordinary good or bad.

With respect to the Great Perfection teachings, it is said that people like Padmasambhava who have practiced a great deal in previous lives will recognize, internalize and accomplish the teachings as soon as they hear them. Ordinary people like ourselves may feel that these ideas have the ring of truth, but we need to practice on a more ordinary level in order to extend beyond the words into actual, continuous manifestation. For us, the more ordinary paths of renunciation, generation of compassion, and shamatha and vipashyana are more appropriate. Even so, we might be able to appreciate that the legend of Padmasambhava's birth could also be an allegory for discovering our own pre-existing

enlightened nature, a nature that, like Padmasambhava, doesn't have external causes such as a father or mother.

*You have attained supreme, wondrous siddhi.*

*Siddhi* means "powers." There are two kinds: relative and absolute. Relative siddhis are powers that relate to the phenomenal world. They could refer to powers as simple as the mechanical aptitude to fix cars, or to highly unusual abilities such as being able to leave foot prints in stone, read minds, or predict the future. Absolute siddhi is the ability to recognize and remain in the totally awake wisdom mind. Relative siddhis often arise as by-products of enlightenment, but sometimes they appear spontaneously in otherwise ordinary individuals. In the case of ordinary people, the more supramundane relative siddhis are regarded as potentially problematic, because they can result in seductive sidetracks that actually enhance the sense of solidified self.

Padmasambhava's legendary siddhis came into play with respect to the obstacles that arose in bringing the dharma to Tibet, where others before him had failed. Padmasambhava, in fact, was working on a grand scale, on a scale in space involving a whole country and in time involving many centuries. Because of his ability to see into the future, he could tell when, at a later time, particular teachings would be appropriate. He left many teachings that would be rediscovered at the appropriate time by special yogis called tertöns. The *Seven-Line Supplication to Padmakara*, for example, was discovered by a yogi named Chökyi Wangchuk. Our own founder, Trungpa Rinpoche, discovered many such teachings when he was a young man in Tibet.

On his arrival in Tibet, Padmasambhava faced resistance from the native religious traditions, from the rugged physical environment, and from what might be called the psyche of the land and people. Many of these obstacles are described in the stories as demonic forces. If Padmasambhava were try to bring dharma on a such a vast scale to North America today, one could imagine the obstacles that would presented by the national psyche of North American materialism and the existing religions. These were the obstacles that Trungpa Rinpoche faced, and one can see why the story and example of Padmasambhava were so important to him.

Because of Padmasambhava's profound openness, he saw the energies involved in those obstacles as opportunities. Many of the protector practices that are done in Tibet today originated from Padmasambhava's encounters with those forces, which he transformed into aides for spreading and protecting the dharma.

*Surrounded by your retinue of many dakinis.*

Dakinis are embodiments of the feminine principle—either in human or non-human form. The feminine principle in tantric Buddhism refers to the insight, or prajna, that discovers the emptiness of our conceptual, thought-based solidifications of the world. The masculine principle is more connected with methods or skillful means. Padmasambhava used many masculine skillful means to subdue the obstacles facing him. However, he knew that unless the masculine principle is balanced with the feminine principle of openness, emptiness and insight, the skillful means become mere spiritual and materialistic technologies, similar to those to maintain nation states or corporations.

Being surrounded by many dakinis has different levels of meaning. On one level it could be said that Padmasambhava was surrounded by the feminine principle in the form of female goddesses, and thus was able to balance the masculine skillful means with the feminine principle of insight. On another level, Padmasambhava took many female human consorts and brought them into enlightenment. Among these was Tibet's most famous woman yogi, Yeshe Tsogyal. Western observers might think that this is just another example of patriarchal harem-building. However, Yeshe Tsogyal herself took male consorts and taught them in the same way. This sort of relationship between teacher and student would be the essence of political incorrectness today, but in the Tibetan culture, if a teacher is truly egoless, and the student is ready, the intimacy and power of the male-female relationship presents unique opportunities for transmission of the true heart of the teachings.

*We practice following your example.  
Please approach and grant your blessing.*

Again, there are at least two levels of understanding possible. Tibetan legend has it that Padmasambhava never actually died. He resides in the Copper-Colored Mountain pure land, beyond the view of ordinary humans. From this vantage point, he watches over the dharma, and issues forth when called.

Another, second level of understanding suggests that the more we know of his story, the more merely thinking of Padmasambhava will open our minds to vast possibilities. Part of this level of understanding is that our own Padmasambhava nature is always there, waiting.

## COMMUNITY

The Kootenay Shambhala Centre is home to a diverse and vibrant community of about 35 members who share a connection to mindfulness-awareness meditation and the aspiration to realize 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. Everyone's participation is invited and appreciated.

You can keep in touch with our Centre by visiting our website 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 (as a PDF file) and little else. If you subscribe to our Active Friends and Members list, you'll get the newsletter plus reminders about upcoming programs and events, announcements about community activities, and an assortment of other community-related messages. To join either list, contact us 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 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](mailto:info@nelsonbuddha.com).