



THE SHAMBHALA MEDITATION
CENTER

OF ST JOHNSBURY

JULY NEWSLETTER 2003

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COMMUNICATIONS . . .

Who Are We Anyway?

On June 17 Richard Reoch, the President of Shambhala International, announced that he would be meeting with the Sakyong and others about major changes needed in the way that the mandala is structured, governed, and financed. These meetings were provoked by a financial crisis, caused in part by the rise of the Canadian dollar. On June 20 he announced that after a week of intensely difficult and painful decision making, the staff at Shambhala International (SI) would be reduced on July 15 to a small skeleton group which would maintain the Sakyong and the financial integrity of the organization, but most usual activities would cease until financial stability was achieved. Most of you have had the opportunity to read the email in which this announcement was made.

On Wednesday June 25 Newcomb participated in a conference call with Richard Reoch. His report on that call follows. Richard expressed great appreciation for the support, both financial and emotional, which he and the staff of SI have received, but he emphasized that this was not a fund-raiser. He told of responding to one major donor who had asked how to help with "Don't throw your money at trying to maintain the past. Save it for building the future." On the other hand, recurrent donations through automatic withdrawal are greatly desired, as they allow for stable operation.

He tried to focus attention on questions of view: Who are we as a Shambhala sangha? What is the binding factor or glue is that binds us together in our new diversity? He noted explicitly how much diversity there already is within our sangha in terms of teachers or gurus, and in terms of practices. In the old days there was an easy answer: we were students of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. We need to arrive at a new understanding that reflects our diversity. The other main topic was the organization of the mandala. In Europe all donations go through the central office, which takes a percentage for its support. Here we have no such arrangement. All dues to a Shambhala Center stay at the Center, and less than half of the members of Centers also support SI. We have no common understanding of the meaning of membership and the relation between membership in a local center and membership in SI.

The spirit of the conference call was to raise questions that will be explored in local centers as part of the process leading up to the Shambhala Congress in November. Each center will name one or two delegates to attend, and the Center is asked to support them so that attendance does not become the prerogative of the moneyed class.

Richard mentioned two groups whom he hopes particularly to magnetize: younger members like those who attended Vajra Dawn, and older students of the Vidyadhara who feel alienated from SI.

At the Thursday Night Talk of June 26 we had a preliminary discussion of these issues. After Newcomb summarized the conference call, the question of who we are and what binds us together was addressed by each of the people attending. Here are some of the responses:

- A longing in our heart.
- Shambhala society.
- But combining Shambhala with Buddhism won't work!
- A common practice and a commitment to practice for ourselves and others.
- A structure of study of the Shambhala and Kagyu teachings.
- Following the leadership of the Sakyong, who is still developing as a teacher.
- This diversity is very confusing!
- The bond has been that we were all Buddhists.
- A sense of devotion.
- Our mandala feel fragmented, and needs to centralize.
- Older students are bound to their own root gurus.
- We are bound by the aspiration to help all sentient beings.
- Why are the students left to take care of the dirty business?
- Taking refuge within this sangha, which is part of a larger sangha.
- We used to have a natural hierarchy.
- The Vidyadhara, through his book and his son, the Sakyong.
- A bold effort to say we can make things better.
- Optimism about human potential.
- The realization that every moment defines itself, and things are always changing.
- We are brilliant, creative, perceptive, open minds, and are called upon to manifest our brilliance.
- A commitment to help our world situation, in which the Vidyadhara encouraged us.
- We are willing to work with our minds so as not to contribute to the aggression in our world.
- A faith in the magic of Shambhala, as manifested recently at the Authentic Leadership Conference of the Shambhala Institute.

The great range of responses encourages us to contemplate these questions fully and not feel that we need to get a quick answer.

LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Prison Dharma

The meditation group at the Work Camp, the minimum security prison in St. J., now meets twice a week for an hour, which is devoted to a mix of sitting, teachings, and discussion. As we have come to know each other and practice together, the distinction between inmate and volunteer has begun to soften, and a sense of sangha has developed which includes both inmates and volunteers. The Work Camp administration deserves recognition for being receptive to new approaches, and for their cooperation in making the environment workable. More commonly prison sanghas are formed of inmates, with at best occasional visits by outside teachers.

The three core members of the group are in the "Discovery Program," an intense round-the-clock therapeutic community focused on substance abuse. Their appreciation for the dharma group is palpable. All three received furloughs to attend Sakyong Mipham's lecture and book signing, where the Center gave them copies of *Turning the Mind into an Ally* which gave them a chance to meet the Sakyong. It was not your usual prison night. They have all now been to sit at the Center, and one member is exploring the possibility of moving to Karmê Chöling after his release.

We now have eight certified volunteers who can visit the Work Camp without getting prior approval as a "guest volunteer." Volunteers who have made enough visits have come to feel part of the prison sangha, even as we recognize the dramatic difference in external freedom between inmates and volunteers. The future of this sangha is uncertain as all of the prisoners are in the final months of their terms.

Recently four volunteers from the dharma group made a two-hour presentation on meditation to the fifty men in the Discovery Program. We received a wide range of responses from our captive audience, ranging from total indifference to mild ridicule (the program teaches skills of politeness) to real curiosity. But those who were interested often felt that the demands of the Discovery Program did not leave them with enough time and energy to explore meditation.

Recently the group has been stirred by the possibility of meeting His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is conducting a dialogue in September with about twenty former prisoners, an event to take place in New York in September. The meeting will also be attended by Tibetan teachers who spent years in prison, and the subjects to be discussed will include

- inner freedom in any circumstance
- compassion in times of difficulty
- overcoming negative actions
- overcoming anger
- developing virtue
- the precepts of nonharming

We can nominate up to three former prisoners, or current prisoners who are able to obtain a furlough. The organizers are particularly looking for those with potential to be leaders or teachers in the field of prison dharma.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Current Staffing

Coordinators: Tune Faulkner & Newcomb Greenleaf
 Practice: Mary Beth Furr
 Finance: Vicky Schafer & Emily McAdoe
 Facilities: Michael Leszczynski
 Publicity: Sal DeMaio
 Study: Anne Stevens
 Secretary: Karen Bufka
 Rusung: Michael Taney
 Membership: Barry Rossinoff

June Meeting Highlights

1. **Practice:** We're on the summer schedule, nynthuns 9am-12 on the 1st Sunday of the month only.
2. **Facility:** The shrineroom at the center has a new glow to it, come and sit under the new lights. On Sat. Michael L., Greg, Mike Heffernan, David W. Catherine Clark and Eric put in the new lighting at the center, painted the suite, and trimmed out the new storage room. It looks fantastic.
3. **Publicity:** Summer publicity will consist of continuing the usual large box ad and Sal will investigate getting listed in the *Caledonian* in the "Things to Do" column as well.

Library News

Thank you to Sandy Raynor, Marcy Celiz, and Madge Rossinoff for contributions of books and audio tapes this month. Just a reminder to take a few minutes to read the procedures for checking out and returning materials; Simple instructions are posted on the library shelf. Enjoy the library; Bring books and tapes back on time; Give Sue Shaw your suggestions for acquisitions or anything else; and feel free to water the plant if it's dry.

Upcoming Events

The *Turning the Mind into an Ally* class will be offered again as a class for this summer, and we will work on presenting Shambhala Buddhist classes for the fall.

KARME CHOLING NEWS

Acharya Visit

The Acharyas will be meeting with Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche during his visit here in October. The meeting will take place October 23, arrival day to October 27, departure day. This is also the time for the Vajrayogini Abhisheka and Bodhisattva vows. Karme Choling is full and booked from top to bottom. Please consider hosting one or more Acharya during this time. Please contact Heika directly at programsgr@karmecholing.org. We will be needing accommodations for approximately 19 Acharyas, and you gain the merit.

Program Credit Reminder

You can earn program credits at the rate of \$10 per hour. KCL could use the help - especially during the busy summer season. Work and apply your credits immediately toward any program at karme Choling. Contact: Darryl Rudy 633.4747 ext. 147 or operations@karmecholing.org

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

A Memorable Exchange with the Vidyadhara

THEME: Enlightenment

Student: If I don't exist, why bother?

Trungpa Rinpoche: I beg your pardon?

S: If I don't exist and enlightenment doesn't exist, why bother trying to...I don't have the right words...why bother?

TR: That is the sixty-dollar question. (It has gone down in value.) Everybody's asking that: "Why bother?" But in order to find out why you should bother, you have to find out why not? That problem hasn't been solved....

Student: ...I ran across one phrase that really stuck in my mind. "The attainment of human birth is a mighty opportunity that is not to be frittered away." Could you comment on that in the light of what has just been said about non-existence and why bother?

Trungpa Rinpoche: It's very simple. This life is very valuable. Human birth is very important. You have a chance to practice, a chance to learn the truth, and still the question of "Why bother?" keeps cropping up again and again. You see, the path actually consists of "Who am I? What am I? What is this? What isn't this?" all the time until enlightenment is actually achieved. The question "Why bother?" has never been answered. It becomes one of the mantras of the path. "Why bother?" goes on all the time.

From THE PATH IS THE GOAL, pages 45 to 46.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Open Letter to the Sangha

We love our parties, receptions and potlucks. Any food offered at an event at the Center seems to be a clear act of love. Hooray for acts of love. Yet I'm disturbed by the use of plastic plates, cups, and utensils that get ditched in the garbage.

Simple suggestion: Use only paper plates and cups. And use our cutlery that can be washed. And let's try to be mindful of packaging and the recycling of drink containers. And please, no more paper towels. Start ripping up old cotton shirts etc. for cleaning rags.

Thank you for considering this ordinary detail. I couldn't remain silent any longer and feel correct to bring this "mundane" issue to the community for consideration.

Sandy Raynor

Shambhala Center of St. Johnsbury

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
		1 Tai Chi 5:00-6:30 Executive Committee 6:30	2 Silent Sitting 6:00 Turning the Mind into an Ally book class (second meeting) 7:10	3 Tai Chi 4:00-5:30 Sitting 6:00 Thursday Night Talk 7:10	4	5
6 Nynthun 9:00-12:00 Maitri Bhavana between 11 and 12	7	8 Tai Chi 5:00-6:30	9 Silent Sitting 6:00 Turning the Mind into an Ally book class (third meeting) 7:10	10 Tai Chi 4:00-5:30 Sitting 6:00 Thursday Night Talk 7:10	11	12
13 Sitting 11:00-12:00 Sadhana of Mahamudra	14	15 Tai Chi 5:00-6:30	16 Silent Sitting 6:00 Turning the Mind into an Ally book class (fourth meeting) 7:10	17 Tai Chi 4:00-5:30 Sitting 6:00 Thursday Night Talk 7:10	18	19 Kado with Marcia Shibata-Blundell 1:00-4:30
20 Sitting 11:00-12:00	21	22 Tai Chi 5:00-6:30	23 Silent Sitting 6:00 Turning the Mind into an Ally book class (fifth meeting) 7:10 Vajrayogini Feast 5:30	24 Tai Chi 4:00-5:30 Sitting 6:00 Thursday Night Talk 7:10	25	26
27 Sitting 11:00-12:00	28	29 Tai Chi 5:00-6:30 Sadhana of Mahamudra 6:00	30 Silent Sitting 6:00	31 Tai Chi 4:00-5:30 Sitting 6:00 Thursday Night Talk 7:10		

July 2003