



THE SHAMBHALA MEDITATION
CENTER
OF ST. JOHNSBURY

AUGUST NEWSLETTER 2004

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RECOGNIZING, QUESTIONING, AND LAUGHING:

Awakening From Belief

On a rainy Wednesday evening in early June, Ken McLeod walked into the Shrine Room in St. Johnsbury, VT and delivered an engaging opening talk to a five-day workshop, entitled, "Awakening From Belief". Having endured a rain delayed flight from Los Angeles to Burlington and a ride from Burlington to St. Johnsbury, Ken proceeded from the car to the Shrine Room, refusing respite, and laid the foundation for a rich and practical workshop. The following accounts were written by participants in the workshop.

Three years ago Pema Chödrön assigned Wake Up to Your Life as the recommended reading for her video class on the Four Immeasurables. I knew only that the author, Ken McLeod, had been the translator for Kalu Rinpoche. But when I started reading the book, I was quite bowled over by the clarity of his thought and the skillful way in which he turned familiar teachings into powerful practices.

We had the good fortune of persuading Ken to come and teach in St. Johnsbury, with the topic being karma and the title of the workshop "Awakening from Belief". The invitation or injunction presented was to recognize the habitual patterns which take over our lives and render us unconscious while they operate, and then to "disidentify" with the pattern and set forth to dismantle it. How can we know that a pattern is in operation. One teaching was to look for the following three warning signs:

1. what we don't recognize (here one needs the help of a friend),
2. what we don't question (i.e. beliefs),
3. what we don't laugh at.

Overall the workshop presented a strong challenge to passivity in practice, to the attitude of simply doing what one is told to do with a belief that lightning will strike and we will find ourselves enlightened. *Newcomb Greenleaf*

"Return to what is already there and rest"

The above precept instructed me in meditation in attention - being mindful and aware - without the burden of concentration, struggle or expectation. By resting in attention, I was able to "take a break" from my hyper-active, hyper-discursive mind and create the space and equanimity necessary to establish a solid foundation of Shamata practice. This simple instruction was crucial in reviving what had become a stagnant and frustrating Shamata practice, and enabled me to begin the practices of dismantling habituated patterns. Ken McLeod's teachings were inspiring and very valuable to me.

Michael Beauregard

"Awakening From Belief" was a very potent and powerful program. I realized I had some pretty strong beliefs about our own particular style of Buddhism. I was relying on our forms more than I was the meaning behind the forms. As Ken said, whenever you say to yourself, "I have to have this, can't have that", it's a guarantee that you've just invited in some suffering.

Ever since the program ended several weeks ago, little quotes like the above pop into my head. Here's another to contemplate: "If I weren't reacting in this way right now, what would I have to feel?" Uncomfortable, of course! There's always a fear underlying the reaction.

One more: "You can't wake up by being a nice person" - the word nice comes from the Latin word ignore. If you want to wake up, you have to be ruthless with your patterns." Hmm, is maitri holding hands with ruthlessness?

Tune Faulkner

I was ready to boogie outta there. Wasn't all that engaged the first day, as the talk he gave was a bit too relative, the questions from participants, intelligent yet predictable. I felt distracted, mildly bored. And then late in the day, an old gent asked a question, very direct about something he had done, very pain filled which coated him for decades.

The air in the room changed, all of us focused. I'm thinking, "Finally! Someone has the courage to ask a complex question from their life experience!" How Ken replied was a turning point for me. He took a long slice of silence before speaking. His voice was incredibly tender in tone. The words he chose cut right to the essence, into the heart of skillful communication. I got to witness "right speech" in action. From that point onward, Ken McLeod had my full respect, attention. The retreat changed for me in an instant, for the remaining two days. Very tough two days on the cushion, as I practiced what he came to teach.

Sandy Raynor

There are many haunting points lingering in my mind from that seminar. Much of what was said has, of course, gone in one ear and out the other. However, I found it particularly poignant and skillful on Ken's behalf, that he had people make a kind of commitment to institute some effort, some personal practice, into one's daily life within the 72 hours following the end of the final session. Each person was invited to voice some aspiration and intention. In my case, I decided to set up a secret shrine (something other people would not necessarily think of as a shrine) in my office, and to inject a determined pause in my speech patterns whenever I noticed I was rambling. So, the Monday or Tuesday after the weekend I put up a poster of a flower arrangement exhibition with the name of the artist "Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche" on the wall at work. It has served to accent my mindfulness efforts and spark my awareness of patterns within myself. During staff meetings I focus more on being present and listening than on contributing verbally. I find this helps extend the daily sitting practice and is just one example of the benefits of the four days we spent together. Thanks Newcomb for making it happen!

Roger Guest

CENTER ACTIVITIES:

COMMUNITY MEETING will be held August 29th, after Sunday sitting. It will be potluck with the meeting place to be announced.

Study Programs:

MEDITATION sessions are held Wednesdays and Thursdays from 6 – 7 p.m. and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Nyinthuns occur the first Sunday of every month, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. for the summer.

Details of the fall nyinthun schedule will follow the August Executive Committee meeting.

THE KHANDRO RINPOCHE Study Group: Meets each month on the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 6:45 PM. The text is "Treasury of Precious Qualities" by LongchenYeshe Dorje, Kangyur Rinpoche, is the selection Khandro Rinpoche recommends from her Gateway Curriculum. New & Old students welcome. No charge. For more info, call Vicki Schafer @ 633-3939 or Joan Kydd @ 748-0330.

THE KEN MCLEOD group meets on Thursday evenings at 7:10 p.m. at the Center. They listen to and discuss audio excerpts from Ken's June "Awakening From Belief" workshop that was held here in St. Johnsbury. The suggested reading for newcomers to the group is the fifth chapter in *Wake Up To Your Life*; Karma and Dismantling Belief. All are welcome!

TAI CHI is taught and practiced on Tuesday nights from 5 to 6:30 p.m.

Facility Issues:

SHRINE ROOM DOORS - Kudos to Eric Herminghausen, Michael Leszczynski, and Greg McNally for hanging the new doors to the Shrine Room. The doors will provide us with a greater sense of container, allowing Shrine Room protocol to be refined and enhanced. The protocol will follow the general shrine room protocol presented at Karne Choling and other Shambhala Centers. A written protocol will be forthcoming at the Center.

FENG SHUI will be a topic for discussion at the community meeting. Several ideas have arisen about enclosed space and the situation of furniture and art at the Center.

PROGRAM CREDIT will be offered to the individuals who prepared and installed the shrine room doors and who do other construction work that occurs at Center. The program credit will be good for programs at KCL as well as the Center.

A **TELE-CONFERENCE** System with a \$500 value was purchased by Michael Taney for \$99 dollars from Ebay in June. The system will allow people to participate via phone with a Community or Executive Committee meeting.

THE FOUR DIGNITIES BANNERS will be purchased for \$1000 and be placed in the Shrine Room.

Practice:

PRACTICE COORDINATOR was a position recently vacated by Mary Beth Furr. Many thanks to Mary Beth for her work! We are looking for a new Practice Coordinator and will discuss the filling of this position at community meeting

Finances:

The Center has ~ \$2000 in restricted funds and ~ \$2000 in unrestricted funds. (see Financial Report) The Ken McLeod Workshop was a good source of revenue, bringing in \$1500.

The possibility of a yard sale to raise funds was spoken of at the Exec. Cmte Mtg., which will be a subject of discussion at the next community meeting.

\$532.50 is in the scholarship fund. The scholarship fund is for programs at KCL and at the Center. Requests for scholarships for programs outside these two spheres will be considered on a case-by-case basis. To apply, submit a written request to Newcomb and Tune for review. In the instance of scholarship funds for a program at Karne Choling, we can request matching funds.

The Konchok Foundation thanked us for the donation we made a few months ago and requested further donations. The request is under advisement.

Newsletter:

The newsletter was discussed with David Horton who has volunteered for an unspecified length of time to help with the production of the Center Newsletter. Ideas for the contents of the Newsletter will be discussed at the next community meeting.

Nalanda Gate:

We will have a discussion of the nature and role of the Nalanda Gate at the next community meeting. Among topics to be discussed is the place of art at the Center.

Shambhala Training:

We will run a Shambhala Level I on October 15-17. Details will follow. We will discuss the creation of a co-coordinator to accompany Greg McNally in the oversight of Shambhala Training at the next community meeting.

New Business:

We have inserted the option for walking meditation into the umdze's instruction book. The umdze will have the option of calling for walking meditation during meditation periods.

Executive Committee:

- Coordinators: Tune Faulkner & Newcomb Greenleaf
- Practice: Open position
- Finance: Emily McAdoo
- Facilities: Michael Leszczyski
- Publicity: Open position
- Study: Anne Stevens
- Secretary: David Horton
- Rusung: Michael Taney
- Membership: Barry Rossinoff
- Shambhala Training: Greg McNally

Articles and News submissions to the Newsletter are welcome. Please send any news and dharma relevant articles to David Horton @dryder47@yahoo.com. We are an engaged publication!





Shambhala Meditation Center of St. Johnsbury

August 2004

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
						1 __9:00am-noon nyinthun
2 __6:00pm yoga	3 __5:00-6:30pm Tai Chi __6:30pm Executive Committee meeting	4 __6:00-7:00pm silent sitting	5 __9:00am yoga __6:00-7:00pm sitting and chants __7:10pm McLeod Study Group	6 __9:00am yoga	7	8 __11:00- 12:00am sitting and chants
9 __6:00pm yoga	10 __5:00-6:30pm Tai Chi __6:45pm Khandro Rinpoche study group	11 __6:00-7:00pm silent sitting	12 __9:00am yoga __6:00-7:00pm sitting and chants __7:10pm McLeod Study Group	13 __9:00am yoga	14	15 __11:00- 12:00am sitting and chants
16 __noon-1:00pm Mahamudra sadhana __6:00pm yoga	17 __5:00-6:30pm Tai Chi	18 __6:00-7:00pm silent sitting	19 __9:00am yoga __6:00-7:00pm sitting and chants __7:10pm McLeod Study Group	20 __9:00am yoga	21	22 __11:00- 12:00am sitting and chants
23 __6:00pm yoga	24 __5:00-6:30pm Tai Chi __6:45pm Khandro Rinpoche study group	25 __6:00-7:00pm silent sitting	26 __9:00am yoga __6:00-7:00pm sitting and chants __7:10pm McLeod Study Group	27 __9:00am yoga	28	29 __11:00- 12:00am sitting and chants __12:10 Community Meeting
30 __noon-1:00pm Mahamudra sadhana __6:00pm yoga	31 __5:00-6:30pm Tai Chi					