



THE SHAMBHALA MEDITATION
CENTER
OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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SEPTEMBER MINDFULNESS:

In September, the green hills around town are in final full color. "When the goldenrods and asters are in bloom," fellow New Englander Henry David Thoreau wrote, "can winter be far off?" He loved the autumn equinox. The changing leaves were not a melancholy sight to Thoreau, rather he saw how the falling leaves opened the forest and brought in more light. Always keenly aware of the changes around him, Thoreau understood how the passing of seasons provided a wonderful opportunity for mindfulness.

September is an ideal time for cultivating our awareness of change. It is an opportunity to observe the passing flow of experience: of seeing birth, growth, maturity, decay and death as simply transitory objects. In September we can focus our concentration on the changing seasons the changes in the landscape around and the changes in our own being as well. The first trick, of course, is to be able to focus our mind on a single point - ideally a point without hatred, delusions or other hindrances - then to apply the subtle grace of mindfulness to that awareness. At its very best, mindfulness selects those single points, and notices when our attention has drifted. Henry again: "As the afternoons grow short, and the early evening drives us home to complete our chores, we are reminded of the shortness of life, and become more pensive, at least in this twilight of the year."

Mindfulness gently returns us to simply seeing ourselves and our world of phenomena exactly as we are. In mindfulness we merely register experiences, we do not compare them. It is as if we are seeing things for the first time. We can't be mindful of changes if we are busy regretting the passing of summer, or anticipating the bounty of fall. Whatever experience we may be having, mindfulness accepts that present moment without pride or judgment. It does not linger, nor grasp, but moves with change. It hangs forever on the lip of the passing wave of time.

Now the passing of time and the tilting of the earth has begun to color our hillsides. Looking deeply at the season's change provides us with an opportunity for practice.

Thoreau kept a journal. One September late in his life, he recorded a day of wandering the hills of New England. After noting how the plants he saw on his jaunt were changing, he jotted down a reminder: "How to live. How to get the most life. How to extract its honey from the flower of the world. That is my every-day business."

May such deep mindfulness be our business as well.
- Alan Boye

SOCIAL ACTION:

President Richard Reoch visited the St. Johnsbury Shambhala Center on the evening of March 29th to speak about social change. We have transcribed excerpts of his very engaging talk and presented them here. President Reoch began his talk by speaking about the origin of the Indian suits he was wearing.

He applied for work after college to all manner of "do-good" organizations. Receiving rejection notices from all, including Amnesty International, he nonetheless purchased a one-way ticket to the U.K., showed up at the doorstep of Amnesty International and said: "Here I am". President Reoch's fearless desire to work for Amnesty International landed him a job in India, where he bought his fine apparel for a very reasonable price.

My work in India with Amnesty International has given me a particular sensitivity not only to those issues [dealing with cases of cruelty and torture], but to the kind of practice that we do in the Shambhala world. I am bit of a living experiment in this whole area on how to work with extreme situations in human existence and the demands of compassion and not getting completely destroyed.

I thought I might say just a little bit about that because that's a part of the process that is going on in our Shambhala world. What it means to "turn the flower outward," to use the Sakyong's phrase, and what it means to actually implement this phrase we have about "enlightened society." In some ways things would be much simpler for us if all we claimed was to teach meditation. It would be a heck of a lot simpler for me, I can tell you. Then we would just be delivering meditation programs. People could come, learn the mediation technique and go away and perhaps come back. The vision of the Vidyadhara in coming to the West, which was already clear in his mind before he left Tibet, was that there has to be a better way to organizing human society. There's very poignant material in his book "Born In Tibet" where he talks about the impending arrival of the Chinese Army. He was thinking not just about his situation as an abbot in a nation that was being overrun. He said that there was a vision that arose in his mind of a different type of human society. It was so clear that it was his mission, in coming to the West, that meditation practice and learning to work with our hearts and our minds be the foundation for that [different type of human society], but it is not the goal.

The goal is how we manifest in our relations with each other in enlightened ways and how that energy and that experience radiates into the world which is so startlingly characterized by greed and violence and all forms of aggression and social degradation.

There's a lot of interest these days from people who have been professionally involved in social care or social activism and have realized at a certain point you start to mirror in your own behavior and own feelings and your own attitudes the same problems that you are trying to overcome. So the real challenge is that if you're going to swim in a sea of poison, how do you do that without getting poisoned? In my work, as I mentioned, with Amnesty International, and I don't want to speak ill of the organization, but I can tell you quite frankly that we had enormous problems.

We were a secular outfit and there was a basic reliance on rationality and will power, coupled with a little bit of stiff upper lip. There was a general idea that if you were working for a good cause, that was enough. Over time, I noticed that people became extremely aggressive with each other. I tried to understand this... not that I didn't suffer from this too; I was extremely aggressive myself. I wanted to put my hand around the Shah of Iran and throttle him. But, I couldn't. So, a research assistant might happen by and say he lost a paper and you'd want to throttle him. There was so much misplaced aggression.

We had a high incidence of what is now known as carpal tunnel syndrome or repetitive stress injury. We had an expert come in to investigate this high incidence of injury and he reported that we had the highest rate of injury around. Higher than the chicken plucking industry which traditionally has the highest rate. So, there was a recommendation for a complete change of desks and computer keyboards and we're a voluntary organization and we couldn't afford those changes. I don't think, despite what the ergonomic experts said, that the source of this pain was whether or not the keyboards had curves or the chair height was proper in relation to the desk. I think this had to do with the fact that we had not acknowledged the enormous amount of pain and injustice and cruelty that we were dealing with every day.

We were allowing all this daily exposure to cruelty and injustice get into our blood without acknowledging it. I mentioned this to an otherwise courageous and brilliant, administrator in the office and his response was that I might be right but that he could not deal with the consequences of it in the office if we were to admit it to ourselves.

Training to work with one's own chaos and the things that are the most hard and intractable in one's own life and not to push them away, but to hold them with a inquisitive kindness; the ability to hold our seats and not get all blown away by what's going on. Then to extend this kind of accommodation to each other. Being able to do this as a community provides a training ground.

With Kasung practice in mind, the Vidhyara said, as early as 1982, that we should all sit on our gomens and visualize ourselves as international peacekeepers. I don't think he meant that just as an analogy. Rather, that this is the bootcamp for training in genuine international peacekeeping.

CENTER ACTIVITIES

COMMUNITY MEETING will be held September 5th at the Shambhala Center, after Sunday sitting. Please bring yourselves and a dish or drink, if you wish, for the potluck meal. Among the topics to be discussed at the Community meeting are:

- Open positions of: Publicity Coordinator and Co-coordinator of Shambhala Training.
- Thursday night talks and/or classes.
- Shrine room decor changes.
- Nalanda Gate and the place and type of art at the Center.

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. until October. Starting in October, the nyinthuns will run from 9a.m. until 12p.m. with an hour lunch and then from 1p.m. until 4p.m.

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 Longchen Yeshe Dorje, Kangyur Rinpoche, 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! Good news for Ken McLeod students! He has decided to return to teach in St. Johnsbury next year in July. He will teach the Four Immeasurables and associated practices.

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

KADO, THE WAY OF FLOWERS Along with others in the area, I have been studying Kado with Marcia Shibata for a few years now. We take lessons a few times a year where we learn basic principles of flower arrangement. Each session begins with meditation followed by a demonstration, then each student works on an arrangement until they are ready for a critique. The tone is a perfect balance of discipline and lightness. This discipline has become a central part of my life and spiritual practice because of the elements of art, nature, meditation and devotion. Depending on materials used and approach, much variety can be created with even the first lessons and it is a pleasure to do arrangements for the center in order to practice these principles. I am sharing this because Marcia will be teaching again on October 2, 9 and 23. Her classes are open to new students once a year and this is the series to join for the first time. So if anyone is interested in Kado, the time is now.

Also - if center members have flowers in their gardens, please bring them in and make spontaneous arrangements in whatever manner you please. Flowers are always appreciated, not just arrangements by students. The center has put aside a fund to ensure there will be flowers in the winter and for special events, let someone on the board know if you need access to this. Emily McAdoo

Education Fall Schedule

The proposed schedule for the fall will include:

- The Three Jewels (weekend intensive)
September 18-19 Teacher: Newcomb Greenleaf
- The Bodhisattva Warrior: Six Paramitas
(5 classes + one day intensive) Wednesdays,
October 6, 13, 20, 27, November 3 and Saturday
November 13 Teacher(s): TBA
- Shambhala Level I, October 15-17

Still to be scheduled video weekends of:

- Pema Chodron on Losing Appetite for Aggression
- Mingyur Rinpoche on Three Words That Strike The Vital Point

Facility issues

FENG SHUI and the situation of the library will be a topic for discussion at the community meeting.

AN EXTERIOR DISPLAY CASE will be installed on the street side of the pillar in front of the outside door on Eastern Ave.

SHRINE ROOM ceiling may be painted blue and we are going to install a single platform on which all the shrines and the guru chair will reside. These and other facilities questions will be discussed at Community Meeting on Sunday September 5th.

FINANCES The Center has ~ \$2000 in restricted funds and ~ \$2000 in unrestricted funds. (see Financial Report) The proposed date for the Yard sale is September 18th. There is \$532.50 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. Please submit a written request for scholarship funds to Newcomb and Tune for review. In the instance of scholarship funds for a program at Karma Choling, we need to request matching funds.

Executive Committee

Directors: Tune Faulkner & Newcomb Greenleaf
Practice: Oscar Garcia
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@verizon.net. We are an engaged publication.

Once again, may a rain of blessings descend upon Greg Guest and Troll Press for printing our Newsletter.

