



THE SHAMBHALA MEDITATION
CENTER
OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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APRIL NEWSLETTER 2005

The Human Realm

From the moment we open our eyes in the morning, to the moment we fall asleep at night, we human beings are bombarded with stimuli. Vying for our attention is a world "out there", experienced through the windows of our five senses, while meanwhile, "in here" we process what we receive through the elaborate miracle of "brainwork". In the process, we mitigate, translate and communicate through languages, music, art, and emotions. All of this activity occurs in a uniquely human manner.

Usually we only scan the surface of what is going on around us. We see the world as we see an ocean from a hillside. From a distance we might see a shimmering blue field, but if we get closer our perception becomes increasingly more textured. The one color of blue gives way to a mosaic of larger and smaller waves, and a soup of translucent hues. As we get closer still, say if we wade into that ocean, our appreciation is further enhanced. Feeling water is quite different than merely seeing it. And if we taste seawater, our understanding expands to yet another level. Say we decide to go snorkeling. Now the blue field we saw from a distance opens up to us in a very intimate way. And as our knowledge expands so does our curiosity; and to our amazement, when we penetrate the surface of the sea we find entire realms of life inhabited by creatures with strange colors and shapes, bizarre spikey, hard or gooey skins, no lips or legs, and with absolutely no concept of dryness. And soon we start to wonder, "What is their day like?" or "What do they eat?" And before long, "Are they any good to eat? Hmm, maybe with hollandaise sauce, and a little lemon butter...?"

By the same token, if we get down on our hands and knees and examine the universe of our front lawn, or carefully study one square foot of the forest floor, what we find is that life is ubiquitous. Everywhere, above, below, and all around, even inside us, the world is teeming with sentient beings of all contours, colors, and shapes. In one square mile, there are infinite universes of beings. And while each one of us is unique, perceiving and living a life of our own, we are all, from the itty bitsy microscopic to the largest and most sophisticated, related to each other. Furthermore, all facets

and forms of life somehow coexist within the space of each moment in some semblance of harmony. Wow.

Think about that for a second: billions of trillions of minds all sharing one world, each with their own version of reality, all co-existing in mutual interdependence and affecting each other. That's what happens inside every moment. It's pretty incredible when you think about it.

And we can think about it because we are human. Our minds can probe and intuit further than any other form of life (on the planet earth at least). With our unique brains, nerves, hearts and histories, we have the capacity to swim deeper into the ocean of experience and gain access to dimensions of being that remain locked to most other forms of life. Human beings have the capacity to imagine, conceptualize, visualize and realize and thus we, and perhaps we alone, have the rare and precious opportunity to appreciate the dharma and attain enlightenment on behalf of the rest of the soup.

In order to attain enlightenment we must acknowledge that the human realm is infinite but limited. We are restricted to a hospitable range of experience defined, in part, by our organic limitations. We hear only a small fraction of the continuum of sound. We see only those colors within a limited spectrum of light. Our narrow comfort zone on the axis of pleasure and pain is limited to the capacities of our nervous systems, and our life-spans have an innate obsolescence tied to solar and lunar forces. Impermanent elements make up our bodies. We cannot survive in the vacuum of outer space, nor breathe in the depths of the ocean. We die quickly in extreme cold or intense heat. We must have adequate moisture, but not too much. We are pretty much confined to this one magnificent planet which is governed by the current laws of physics and the politics of the current administration. The freedoms and confines of human existence are multidimensional. Life is short; death is definite; and we have no time to waste.

And, of course, not all humans share exactly the same



experience. Even between two siblings in the same family life can be extraordinarily diverse. But the paradigms really start to unravel when we compare our experiences and perspectives with those of animals, birds, or insects. I mean, try to get inside the head of a common housefly. So, while we have some ability to appreciate our lives we cannot grasp the whole picture.

In fact, I believe it is because the sheer magnitude of beauty and intricacy of our human realm is beyond our capacity to contain, that we cry and our hearts break and why we sing and love. Between our unfulfilled capacity for wonder is confronted with practical restrictions, we are addicted to the dream of freedom and constantly trying to fly. Hence, we are constantly dissatisfied; and in our folly we feast on materialism when what we really should have ordered is spirituality.

Scattered loosely all over this planet are more than six billion human beings. In every direction young, old, men, women, human beings doing things that need to be done, and things that do not need to be done. Behind every face there is a mind churning with momentary purpose. Each body moves according to a unique beat of unspoken thought-rhythms. Somewhere on this crowded anthill of confused activity we have accidentally bumped up against a teacher or teaching, and discovered the path that leads to a secret manhole cover. That secret is nowness and it opens into a realm of wisdom. We must lift that lid and enter that realm whenever we have the chance. We have to continue our journey through the amazing human realm where choices and desires never seem to end. But we must be aware, for in this magnificent human realm our greatest spiritual danger comes in the form of constant distraction and loss of focus. *Roger Guest*

Center Activities

Thoughts Upon Retiring

First, a bit of history. Suellyn Whittington, Michael Taney, and others were the pioneers who started the Shambhala Center with a vision the potential of our space (which looked rather dismal at the time). Suellyn was the first coordinator or director and I became her co-director in the fall of 1999. Once the Center was well started Suellyn stepped down and after a few months Tune became my co-director. We have now enjoyed a fine working relationship for almost five years.

But now it feels like time for me to move on. I want to do more writing, more teaching, and maybe even (gasp!) earn an income for a while. It has been a great privilege to serve the Center for this time, and I look forward to

continued involvement from the sidelines. *Newcomb Greenleaf*

Greetings and Farewell,

As Newcomb and I prepare to step down as co-directors of the St Johnsbury Center and the Center proceeds with the search committee to find new directors, I find myself doing a lot of reflecting on the past five years.

Apparently there was a community meeting that I missed five years ago when things were in their infancy. Suellyn had resigned as director with Newcomb when I was asked to take her place as co-director. My first thought was "me?" I'm just a young pup still trying to cut my teeth on this big old dharma bone, I'm still chewing on the surface, I haven't even cut to the marrow yet to see what that tastes like. The next thought was, well if they all trust me to do this job then I'll jump in and do my best. The next several months I spent getting to know the job through Newcomb and for the next five years I saw myself as trying hard to stay in touch with the day to day activities of the center. I relied on Newcomb a lot, we talked several times a week, and when he'd be gone for several days or a week I realized how much he did that I didn't know about.

I think this pup finally made it to the adolescence stage and learned something a bit about balance. The notion of not too tight and not too loose came to mind many times during executive meetings, and listening without judgement (well, not always) but the aspiration was there. And patience, just patience was really important. Mostly what I want to say though is thank you for the opportunity to serve as co-director of the center. I leave with some bittersweet feelings. I'm hopeful that the new leadership will inspire us, have fresh energy for the center and carry us forward on our path to wakefulness. And I want to express my huge appreciation for working with Newcomb for five years. I often wondered why it was such an easy match, I really didn't know Newcomb at all, but as Ken McCleod said about such things that we try to figure out, "just stay with the wondering." *Tune Faulkner*

PARANIRVANA DAY for Vidyadhara Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche will be celebrated at KCL on Monday, April 4th. The day long ceremonies will begin at 7 am with opening chants and end with a Sadhana of Mahamudra Feast at 5pm. Meal and feast donations are appreciated. RSVP please to Cynther at 802-633-4747 x111 or program@karmecholing.org

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 9a.m. until 12p.m. with an hour lunch and then from 1p.m. until 4p.m.

ROTA slots can be filled easily by going online.

Please take advantage of the new electronic sign-up.

If you are not able to get on line, call David Wilde at 603-638-4968 or sign up at the Center.

STROKE PRACTICE takes place during regular sitting hours in the office at the Center!

THE KHANDRO RINPOCHE STUDY GROUP meets every other Tuesday at 6:45 PM. The text is "Treasury of Precious Qualities" by LongchenYeshe Dorje, Kangyur Rinpoche, and the selection Khandro Rinpoche recommends from her Gateway Curriculum. New & Old students welcome. No charge. For more info, call Vicki Schaefer @ 633-3939 or Joan Kydd @ 748-0330.

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

EDUCATION SPRING AND SUMMER SCHEDULE

LINEAGE and DEVOTION will have its daylong intensive on Sunday, April 10th.

LOSING OUR APPETITE FOR AGGRESSION, a video series by **Pema Chodron** will begin Thursday, April 14th at 7:15 pm until 9pm. This four-part video series, "Losing Our Appetite for Aggression," features Pema Chodron teaching simple ways to practice kindness in modern times. Pema reveals how we unconsciously perpetrate aggression, and how we can transform our appetites to include a healthy dose of compassion.

THE THREE WORDS THAT STRIKE THE VITAL POINT, a video series by **Venerable Mingyur Rinpoche**, will begin on Wednesday, April 6th at 7:10 and continue every Wednesday through April. These profound teachings on Dzogchen start from the root text by Patrul Rinpoche on the original teaching of Garab Dorje. Copies of the root text will be available. By Mingyur Rinpoche's instruction, this seminar is available to tantrikas who are practicing mandala or beyond. The seminar was given at the Shambhala Center in Halifax. There is no charge for these teachings, but donations are gratefully accepted.

FOUR FOUNDATIONS of MINDFULNESS will be directed by Judy Lief. This class, from the Second Cycle of Shambhala Buddhist Studies, will be presented on the weekend of May 13-15.

NEW SERVICE AT THE CENTER In the style of

turning the flower outward, recycling and reuse are blossoming in our kitchen. We have 50 cloth dinner napkins and many cocktail size napkins. There are plates and bowls to feed a sizeable feast, of between thirty-five and fifty people. There are many mugs with a style to accommodate almost any personal taste. (Would you like to donate one or more to the collection?). Our compost "genie" still takes care of food waste products, flowers and the like. In addition to the above, there are two bins under the table in the kitchen; one for laundry and one for recyclables. **Please** use the cloth napkins, not the paper ones, and the cloth tablecloths, not the paper ones. Then simply place the used napkins and tablecloths in the laundry basket. They will be washed and returned. The other bin is labeled with the items that can be recycled. Just put them all in the turquoise barrel. No need to sort, but please rinse food from glass, cans and plastic. They will be taken to an area center and recycled for free. A search is underway for reasonable, good looking and serviceable flatware and glassware. Hope you like the new service! *Vickie Schaefer*

Open Positions on the Executive Committee that are or will be in need of enthusiastic volunteers are *STUDY*, *FINANCE* (in June), *PUBLICITY*. We thank Anne Stevens who has stepped down from *STUDY*, Sandy Raynor who has stepped down from *PUBLICITY* and Michael Taney who is stepping down from *FINANCE* in June for serving the community so well! We welcome Susan Noel as the new director of *SHAMBHALA TRAINING* at the Center.

In addition, the Newsletter is searching for a new Editor.

Executive Committee will meet on Monday, April 11th, at 6:30 pm at Newcomb Greenleaf's house. All are welcome!

Executive Committee

Coordinators: Tune Faulkner & Newcomb Greenleaf

Practice: Catherine Clark

Finance: Michael Taney (opening June)

Facilities: Michael Leszczynski

Publicity: Sandy Raynor

Study: open position

Secretary: David Horton

Rusung: Michael Taney

Membership: Barry Rossinoff

Shambhala Training: Sophie Cohen and open position

Newsletter Layout: David Wilde

Thanks to Greg Guest and Troll Press for printing this Newsletter.



Shambhala Meditation Center

of St. Johnsbury

April 2005

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				<u>1</u> _9:00am yoga	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> _9:00-12:00am and 1:00-4:00pm nyinthun sitting
<u>4</u> PARINIRVANA DAY (events at Karme Choling) _6:00pm yoga	<u>5</u> _5:00-6:30pm Tai Chi _6:45pm Khandro Rinpoche study group.	<u>6</u> _6:00-7:00pm silent sitting _7:10pm Mingyur Rinpoche class	<u>7</u> _9:00am yoga _6:00-7:00pm sitting and chants	<u>8</u> _9:00am yoga _6:00-7:00pm Mahamudra sadhana	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u> _9:00am-5:00pm Lineage & Devotion practice intensive _11:00-12:00am sitting and chants
<u>11</u> _6:00pm yoga _6:30pm Exec. Comm. mtg at Newcomb Greenleaf's house	<u>12</u> _5:00-6:30pm Tai Chi	<u>13</u> _6:00-7:00pm silent sitting _7:10pm Mingyur Rinpoche class	<u>14</u> _9:00am yoga _6:00-7:00pm sitting and chants _7:10pm Pema Chodrön class	<u>15</u> _9:00am yoga	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u> _11:00-12:00am sitting and chants _12:30pm potluck and Community Meeting
<u>18</u> _6:00pm yoga	<u>19</u> _5:00-6:30pm Tai Chi _6:45pm Khandro Rinpoche study group	<u>20</u> _6:00-7:00pm silent sitting _7:10pm Mingyur Rinpoche class	<u>21</u> _9:00am yoga _6:00-7:00pm sitting and chants _7:10pm Pema Chodrön class	<u>22</u> _9:00am yoga	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u> _11:00-12:00am Mahamudra sadhana
<u>25</u> _6:00pm yoga	<u>26</u> _5:00-6:30pm Tai Chi	<u>27</u> _6:00-7:00pm silent sitting _7:10pm Mingyur Rinpoche class	<u>28</u> _9:00am yoga _6:00-7:00pm sitting and chants _7:10pm Pema Chodrön class	<u>29</u> _9:00am yoga	<u>30</u>	