

THE SHAMBHALA MEDITATION CENTER

OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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FROM THE DÉCOR DEPARTMENT:

Decorum

Shambhala vision is an antidote to today's chaos. Having the courage to be who you are, a warrior, is the first step to understanding all the turmoil that is happening in our world and it is the first step in creating an enlightened society in which many people can realize their own basic goodness and have some sanity with which to deal with hardships.

In the face of difficulty we can be brave and gentle at the same time. Others can see our bravery and emulate it. Thus a whole society is formed by starting with one simple step discovering dignity. How we present ourselves as Shambhala warriors, to the outside world is not by relating to speed but by relating to space. Space in our minds, space in our environment, and space in our conversations. When this is done we present ourselves in proper elegant fashion. The world around you breathes a sigh of relief. You're not going to be adding to the chaos.

The Dictionary defines decorum, a Latin word, as whatever is suitable, or in good taste, how to behave properly, decently, with dignity.

- How does your home look?
- How do your clothes fit?
- Do you wear blue jeans all the time because it is the fashion?
- Do you speak gruffly or harshly to other people or is your diction clear, precise and gentle?
- Do you email when a friendly human voice would be so much more compassionate?

The journey of becoming a warrior begins with this first step - connecting with our dignity. When you accept this dignity as who you are, it extends to your environment.

When you see your friends or co-workers or relatives you acknowledge their basic dignity and you begin to see that magic that takes place around us all the time. Throughout his all of his writings, the Druk Sakyong pleads with us to make these instructions part of our lives.

Many people suffer immensely due to all the chaos and have no way of understanding it. We have the answer and it starts with a little step.

By Suellyn Whittington

(Both this article and the earlier one From the Decor Department have been written by our Supervisor of Decor and Decorum, Suellyn Whittington. The editor apologizes for not indicating so in the previous issue.)

A MID-WINTER MANTRA

By Alan Boye

It may not seem like it, but the starkness of our Vermont winter can present us with an opportunity for deep practice for the season allows us to become worshipers of the unseen and unknown. In other seasons Nature is frantic in its lushness, and the world is cluttered with distractions. In winter these ten thousand things are silent and tranquil.

We awake to the still reality of dark winter's morning. The floorboards creak as we make our way to the window.

A new snow has fallen. We see the whiteness in the faint light. The tracks we left yesterday have been obliterated in the silent blanket. Nothing has withstood the cold, searching wind. Everything is either sheltered, or buried. Whatever remains visible against the white the bare colorless branches of trees the faded maple leaf caught mid-tumble by the snow - seems a part of the original nature of things.

Still, we resist such silence and the starkness of winter because the noise of our world the clutter and chatter of the things of our minds so pleasingly feeds our desires. We are always trying to manipulate the surface of our world, trying to fix the relationship between our selves and the objects around us. Again and again we return to the silent world of the cushion to try to calm our wanting, our desiring. But even our meditation, when it is used as a means to gain something else peace, contentment, freedom from worry - even mediation too is a part of our desire.

It is difficult to trust the great unfathomable silence, and easy to be distracted by our consciousness and by our illusionary relationship to the world. The trouble is, it is difficult to be aware of distractions unless there is a central focus to be distracted from. That's where the mantra of winter can help. The winter silence can serve as our focus. Deep winter presents us with an empty, silent landscape that is like the vastness of existence. In our practice we can invite the silence to envelope us, to help us still our desire, and to end suffering.

The Prajnaparamita Sutra calls this silence unthinkable, indefinable, ungraspable, nameless, pathless wisdom. That silence is our faith: we must trust the silence to be nothing less and nothing more than the unknowable, here, now. We trust that profound, limitless, reality. It is What Is, and nothing else.

The emptiness of the snow-packed winter is a continuous reminder for us to let go of the countless story fragments we tell ourselves each day, each moment.

Such teaching, like the frigid cold of a January night in Vermont, must penetrate our very skin and muscle and bone. That silence, like the quiet starkness of winter, is the essence of our faith.

Step out into the white silence of our Vermont January and shout, "I am!" Listen: in the dullness of the white snow the "I" vanishes instantly.

PRACTICE DEPARTMENT:

Please note that the January 1st, New Year's Day sitting is only from 11am to noon and the nyinthon that would ordinarily occur on the first Sunday of the month has been moved to the second Sunday, January 8th.

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