

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF SHAMBHALA GOVERNANCE— SACRED WORLD

The basic point of Shambhala leadership is helping others see the Great Eastern Sun, the sun of human dignity, and bringing about Great Eastern Sun society. These two are not separate—seeing the Great Eastern Sun, seeing and manifesting sacred world, is creating Great Eastern Sun society on the spot.

The vision of building enlightened society is not a distant dream, some distant goal we travel towards for untold years before we finally arrive there. When we manifest sacred world, we are manifesting enlightened society on the spot. Therefore, in order to understand what we are doing as leaders in Shambhala, we have to understand what it means to create and transmit sacred world. This is not something that is only up to the teachers in a weekend program – it is up to all of us.

There are a number of ways in which we can “tune into” seeing the Shambhala organisation as a mandala, to connect to Sacred world. In a sense, these principles are trying to point to how the organisation and roles we have are actually a manifestation of the Shambhala teachings. There are many ways of describing this – in the section that follows, seven aspects or principles are laid out.

Leadership to Benefit Others

The job of leadership is helping others see sacred world, and thus the basic approach to leadership in the Shambhala tradition is helping others—bringing out the basic goodness of others.

Seeing sacred world, seeing the Great Eastern Sun, is only possible from the point of view of egolessness. Thus, a fundamental aspect of being leaders in this mandala is to take the view of serving others. Without that view we can never see the sacred world.

Because the job of leadership in the Shambhala tradition is helping others see sacred world, our basic approach to leadership is that of helping others—bringing out the basic goodness of others.

The role model for leadership is the Sakyong, and the role of the Sakyong is to help bring out goodness in others.

The role of the Sakyong is to provide space, to protect the space, so that the flowers can blossom.

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche — Treatise on Society and Organisation

Enlightened Society—Bringing Together the Spiritual and Secular

We are not just janitors in the school where dharma is taught—we and the containers we take care of are inextricably linked with the manifestation of sacred world. They are the expression of sacred world, the way we can present sacred world in a tangible way.

Creating an atmosphere of Great Eastern Sun—sacred world—and the vision of building enlightened society are inseparable, and can be manifested on the spot. Therefore, to understand what we are doing as leaders, we have to understand what it means to create and transmit sacred world. This is not something that is only up to teachers— it is up to all of us.

In the Shambhala and Vajrayana view, because we see our world as sacred, every moment of our experience can be met with mindfulness and used as the path for waking up. Based on that, there is no need at all for separation between the spiritual and the secular, between our ordinary life and our practice.

To help us see our whole lives as an opportunity to wake up, we have many cultural forms—the contemplative arts, etc.—that provide us an opportunity to work with our minds in our everyday life. These are not only practices, but also expressions of our culture that we hand down from one generation to another.

The presentation of the teachings is always done within a Shambhala Buddhist context—that is to say, not only the teacher and the teachings, but also the container and the atmosphere are considered relevant. Thus a whole weekend is an enlightened mandala—not just what is said by a teacher during talks. The teacher is a Director—both the spiritual head of the program as well as its executive manager. This makes for a more powerful teaching situation and offers an example of how we can begin to think of our whole governmental mandala as an opportunity to manifest the teachings.

In holding this view we see that any member of government, any administrator, is involved in not only creating, administering and rejuvenating the forms and containers where the teachings take place, but also in manifesting the teachings in some way. Administrators and teachers may have slightly different emphases in terms of the roles they play, but essentially they are not different. We are not just janitors in the school where dharma is taught—we and the containers we take care of are inextricably linked with the manifestation of sacred world.

Natural Hierarchy

The teachings on natural hierarchy basically express that there is a natural order to things—that there is an order, a harmony to the way the world functions, and from that there is an appropriate way for us to relate to this. Connected to this, every situation has to have a leader.

Another very important aspect of Shambhala leadership is the teachings on natural hierarchy. These teachings basically express that there is a natural order to things—there is a harmony to the way the world functions, and from that there is an appropriate way for us to relate to this.

Natural hierarchy plays a role in the organisation and the forms of Shambhala, first and foremost as expressed in decorum. Based on the natural way of things, there is a

harmonious way to relate to them based on appreciation and respect, rather than on an expression of ego.

Thus, relating to natural hierarchy is a way of bringing out the basic goodness, the sacredness of a situation, and helping things to flower. Equally, from an organisational point of view, every situation needs a leader. The point is not to get bloated by being a leader, or to get depressed or feel oppressed when one is not a leader. Being a leader is just a function one performs for a period of time. One has to submit to the position in order to do it fully, humbly. One should not be confused between fulfilling the role of leader and a sense of personal greatness from leadership.

It is natural that someone must fulfil the role of leadership, of being a central figure in a certain situation, and people need to relate to this person in a certain way because of the role. In the same way, people in such positions need to relate to the further organisational hierarchy with respect, and see themselves as part of a chain which derives its ultimate legitimacy from the Sakyong and from Shambhala vision. There would be no situation, no centres and groups to lead if we were not part of Shambhala, if we were not working for the Sakyong, propagating the energy of sanity from the Kalapa Court.

This is the primary teaching within the literature on natural hierarchy. Specifically, it means that you, as well as the rest of the leadership of the mandala, need to facilitate this dissemination of energy from the Kalapa Court. You must organize the mandala and extend communication in the most effective way.

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche—Treaty on Society and Organisation

Joining Heaven and Earth

In the Shambhala tradition, we often speak of joining heaven and earth—that it is both the role of the Sakyong to join these two together, as well as up to each of us to do so. Joining heaven and earth is bringing together vision and practicality, manifesting the potential of goodness, sacredness in all situations. Actually uplifting our existence and bringing about Great Eastern Sun society.

In joining heaven and earth, we are joining together the basic practicalities of our situations with a sense of vision, inspiration. As leaders we have to be deeply rooted into the earth of our roles – connected to what is going on in our communities with compassion, interest and practicability. At the same time, we also help raise the gaze – remind people of Shambhala vision, or being connected to a wider world, the Sakyong, the Acharyas and senior teachers and practice altogether.

Another important way to reflect upon joining heaven and earth, vision and practicality, is by looking at our graduated path of practice and study. A graduated path of practice and study is a way in which our basic working basis, the starting point of our minds, can be worked with and connected to a sense of forward vision. This is not only an example of joining heaven and earth, but also a very important organisational principle for our

community. Administering this common path and ensuring it is well transmitted is one of the central tasks of leadership in the mandala.

The Sakyong as the Centre of the Mandala

From an inner view, we see our own innate basic goodness and wakefulness as the centre of the Mandala, and from an outer view, we see the Shambhala organization as a Mandala, with the Sakyong, the embodiment of basic goodness, at the centre.

In Shambhala, the Sakyong is in the centre of the mandala and at the centre of our government. He is not only the spiritual head of our society, and the main presenter of the higher teachings, but the centre of our organisational and personal mandala:

When we see sacred world, we see the interconnectedness of all phenomena. Surrendering a discursive view of the world, our awareness can expand and embrace all of perceived reality with precision and luminosity. We do not separate between subject and object, self and phenomena. Mandala is above all the whole of our being, a sense of total existence, with ourselves at the centre as the embodiment of awareness, the King of Basic Goodness. In the same way, the Shambhala organization is a mandala, the locus of awareness, and its centre is the manifestation of basic goodness—the Sakyong.

Thus from an inner view, we see our own innate basic goodness and wakefulness as the centre of the mandala; and from an outer view, we see the Shambhala organization as a mandala, with the Sakyong, the embodiment of basic goodness, at the centre.

Even if we do not understand the profound view of mandala, it is important to keep the Sakyong in mind and remind people of the Sakyong. Whether people like or dislike the Sakyong, simply the fact that he exists is a reminder that we are part of a bigger situation than what is reflected in our community or centre. Whether we appreciate him or are irritated by his existence, the existence of the Sakyong is itself a confirmation of the mandala principle. Just remaining confident in this single point raises our gaze.

Participatory Monarchy – the importance of community participation

The flowering of our innate wisdom and the flourishing of healthy communities go hand in hand and are the expression of sanity coming forth. So we pay particular attention to community well being and the participation of all in the mandala.

In the previous sections we have talked a lot about the importance of the teacher, the hierarchy of the student teacher relationship, the role of the Sakyong as King and Guru. However, it is important to also reflect upon that one very defining aspect of Shambhala governance is the participatory nature, and to stress the importance of a flourishing community.

Our path is based nurturing our own awake state of mind. This is connected with resting in basic goodness, or nurturing our bodhicitta. As we rest in basic goodness, or cultivate

bodhicitta, we bring out aspects of enlightened mind - an innate intelligence and wisdom, as well as the characteristic of communication and exchange. So in cultivating our communities and societies, we try to find many ways to bring out the intelligence and wisdom of all, and invite them to contribute and participate in Shambhala governance. This is the social or participatory of our Shambhala governance monarchy.

Creating enlightened society is not some distant goal, but happens on the spot all the time when we connect to a view of Sacred world. Naturally, this is more powerful if we can do this in a group, a community, and if this is not just a momentary visualisation, but something ongoing. So a healthy flourishing community or practitioners, all holding the view of sacred world, is a powerful manifestation of the teachings, and a seed of a real enlightened society.

A special aspect of the Shambhala mandala is the emphasis on training students as Meditation Instructors, Teachers, Administrators – to directly put into practice their path and to allow them to discover their own innate and brilliant wisdom. We place a lot of trust in people, even if we are all quite junior on the path. Thus there is never simply a top down approach to transmission of wisdom – but a constant exchange of wisdom and invitation to people to participate at all levels of the mandala.

Finally, it is important to add that there has been significant thought put into a real political system, centered around the role of the Delegs. The delegs, selected by community members to be their representatives, are a crucial aspect of the participatory monarchy that Trungpa Rinpoche spoke of. They are part of fulfilling the view of creating enlightened society. The Vidyadhara envisaged a full parliament of Deksyongs. This is currently manifested to some degree in the Shambhala Congress, a bi-annual gathering of delegates from all over Shambhala to come together and discuss the well being of the community.

The Sakyong Wangmo and the feminine principle

It is very easy for an organisation or government to fall into the trap of rigidity, and becoming a bureaucracy, or being too focused on efficiency and getting things done. This happens when we solidify our roles, when we become too fixated on speed and aggression. In fact, we often confuse the organisational structure with Shambhala society. But actually it is the flower of Shambhala society that should blossom on the stem of the organisation.

Taking time to be, to celebrate, to appreciate, to embrace is as essential as tasks that need to be taken care of. These are manifestations of the feminine principle, which binds and brings to flower the aspects of Shambhala.

Elegance and the appreciation of the arts is way in which the feminine aspect of warriorship becomes apparent. Through paying attention to ones appearance and manner, and through engaging in the contemplative arts, there can be a genuine flowering of the fine arts, music, good food. This is the harvest of an enlightened society, and

without the feminine principle and the appreciation of this richness, we cannot speak of the full flowering of enlightened society.