



S H A M B H A L A

## The Rigden Shrine

The new central shrine of Shambhala

In many Shambhala Centres, the main hall now contains the Rigden shrine, designed by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche to be the main public shrine in all Shambhala Centres. Hanging on the wall above the shrine is a thangka (painting) of the Primordial Rigden. The Primordial Rigden thangka mirrors to viewers an image of their enlightened nature, their basic goodness.

Like all shrine imagery in the non-theistic traditions of Buddhism, the thangka aims to remind viewers of qualities inherent in themselves and their lives. The details of the iconography are highly symbolic, each one pointing to an aspect of the view, the training, or the full realization of this basic nature.

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche designed this thangka to be placed on public shrines in Shambhala centres throughout the world. In doing so, the Sakyong points out the unique spiritual inheritance of the Shambhala community - an inheritance that braids together the Tibetan Buddhist vajrayana lineages of Kagyü and Nyingma with the direct, imperial transmission of Shambhala wisdom.

The main shrine is the heart of any Shambhala Centre. Shrines, in general, are meant to remind us, provoke us to wake up from our delusions. The Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche said that having put energy into the creation and care for a shrine, a sense of liveliness then radiates out to the viewer, providing a mirror of their being.

Shambhala centre shrines are also an expression of who we are as a community of practitioners. The Rigden shrine and thangka highlights the Shambhala image of monarch as ruler of the phenomenal world. As well, it manifests the inseparability of the Buddhist and Shambhala teachings and expresses the unity of our Shambhala Buddhist community.

### Links

To order prints of the Rigden thangka: <http://www.rigden.info/frame-main.html>

For more information about the Primordial Rigden thangka:

- [http://www.shambhala.org/about\\_rigden.php](http://www.shambhala.org/about_rigden.php)
- *Realizing Confidence, Making of the Primordial Rigden Thangka* (DVD format)

[http://www.shambhalashop.com/pubsonline/asp/product.asp?product=825&cat=107&ph=&keywords=&recor=&SearchFor=&PT\\_ID](http://www.shambhalashop.com/pubsonline/asp/product.asp?product=825&cat=107&ph=&keywords=&recor=&SearchFor=&PT_ID)

This DVD includes an interview with Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche on the symbolism of the Rigden shrine

- Vajradhatu Publications is publishing a detailed commentary by Acharya David Schneider about the iconography of the Rigden thangka. This will be available from the Shambhala Shop soon.

### **Why has the Rigden shrine been introduced?**

The first shrine designed by the Vidyadhara was very simple— water offering bowls, images, and a crystal ball. This was a departure from traditional Tibetan shrines, which are often elaborate and filled with pictures and objects. In the mid-seventies, when the Vidyadhara was designing the shrines for the new Dorje Dzong in Boulder and Karma Chöling, a student recalls him saying that we should think in terms of Japanese space, American scale, and Tibetan color and decoration. As his teaching evolved, Trungpa Rinpoche introduced changes to the main Buddhist shrine according to his personal vision, and designed shrines for specific practices, both in Buddhist and Shambhala Training traditions.

The Druk Sakyong was a Kagyü and Nyingma lineage holder who also received and transmitted the Shambhala terma and created a family lineage of sakyongs. As our sangha has matured and grown, there are many students engaged in different practices from among all the traditions we have been introduced to. At the same time, we are one community.

What binds us as a community is “...a basic shared vision about Shambhala—enlightened world, enlightened society, Kingdom of Shambhala.” With that as our basic principle, there needs to be some sort of ground.” (Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. Shambhala Congress, 2005)

As an expression of this common ground, the Primordial Rigden shrine, designed by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, returns us to the simplicity of Trungpa Rinpoche’s early shrine. The Rigden thangka presents an image of enlightened nature in the same way that Vajradhara does in the Kagyü tradition and Samantabhadra does in the Nyingma tradition. Here, “the Rigden represents the heart of who we are.” (Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. Shambhala Congress, 2005)

“...(the Rigden) represents wisdom, but also the human aspect of how one can lead one’s life representing domine rigden, the Rigden of basic goodness. ...Here is the image of those individuals who are Rigden, holders of basic goodness, or the vajra nature. That is what the shrine is representing—our own basic goodness. That is the visual image.” (Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. Shambhala Congress, 2005)

The Sakyong has asked all centres to install this shrine as a support for people pursuing the path of Shambhala Buddhist practice and education.

### **What will happen to the Shambhala shrine?**

The Rigden shrine will be the main, public shrine. For other practices and events, temporarily add the appropriate objects and images used for that practice to the Rigden shrine. Primordial Rigden thangka will remain in its central location.

For example: Vajrayogini and Werma thangka, and other images (such as the Shambhala Ashe) may be placed in front of the Primordial Rigden thangka. The shrine accoutrements pertaining to the particular practice may be placed on the main shrine for use during that specific program or feast.

If there is space, permanent Shambhala and vajrayana shrines may be installed in other rooms within the center.

### **What will happen to the Vajradhara thangka, the other images and photos, and the Mahakala shrine?**

Centres may hang the Vajradhara thangka on another wall in the shrine room, or in another appropriate place in the center.

The shrine photos of the Druk Sakyong and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche represent the sakyong lineage of Shambhala, as well as the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages. Photos of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and other lineage holders can be displayed in other locations within the center.

The Mahakala shrine will remain in its place within the main hall.

### **Is there anything special we should do when we install the Rigden shrine?**

To help your community make a meaningful installation, centre directors could send to their community the letter prepared for the Boston sangha (on this site), followed by a community gathering to present and discuss the change—the reasons for installing the shrine, a timeline for your center's transition, where various other practices will take place when the Rigden Shrine is in place, and any other questions and concerns people may have. This is a good opportunity to show the DVD, *Realizing Confidence, Making of the Primordial Rigden Thangka* (available through the Shambhala Shop, [shop@shambhala.org](mailto:shop@shambhala.org))

There isn't any particular ritual required for changing shrines, but sadhakas could, if they want to, come together for a final practice session before the installation and do the following:

- Do at least a daily practice of Vajrayogini (an elaborate shrine is not necessary for this—KEEP all the usual shrine things in place and simply ADD Vajrayogini objects).
- During the concluding section, ask the jnanasattvas to depart
- Gather in the samayasattvas, and ask the bhutas/spirits to go home
- After that, install the new arrangements.

### **Other features and information**

The official portraits of the Sakyong and the Druk Sakyong are available through the Shambhala Shop (902 421-1550, ext. 1, or [shop@shambhala.org](mailto:shop@shambhala.org))

The Sakyong has requested that we place the formal teacher's chair to the left of the shrine, (when facing the shrine) and have a space available to the right of the shrine (representing feminine principle) where we can place a formal chair for the Sakyong Wangmo. When not needed, this space could be occupied by a flower arrangement.

Centers will also have to determine where the timekeeper's seat will be located.