

Unconditional Confidence: The Rigden Weekend

The contentment, joy, fearlessness, and wisdom of the Way of Shambhala culminate in unconditional confidence, embodied in the Rigden. The experience of unconditional confidence is a natural expression of our trust in basic goodness.

This weekend workshop, lead by an acharya, introduces the Rigden in an experiential way. Here, the Rigden could be understood to represent a state of being confident, open, and genuine while at the same time engaged, active, and powerful. Rather than withdrawing from the world, the Rigden represents “ruling” the world, without wavering from basic goodness. With the great problems now facing human society, it seems increasingly important to find simple ways to bring compassion and confidence into the world. Such confidence can be at the level of a president, a mother, an activist, an employee, a business leader, a student, a mechanic, or in any concrete situation. We can “rule” our own lives through gentleness, compassion, fearlessness, and wisdom. This weekend emphasizes unconditional confidence and steadfastness in facing our own difficulties, and the world’s challenges. Confidence can come from unconditional genuineness and wakefulness, instead of arrogance and aggression.

This weekend summarizes and condenses the entire Way of Shambhala journey into a glimpse of confidence. We do not need to go through a detailed presentation of the Rigden principle. This is still an “outer” discussion; students have not yet received the Shambhala terma. Instead, the aspiration is to transmit the quality of the Rigden principle in an accessible and experiential way that will be relevant within everyday life. Therefore, we emphasize the experience of unconditional confidence and how we can engage our world from this confidence. Many people seeking spiritual teachings do not connect the meditation path with actually engaging the world and being of benefit. There is a lingering sense of withdrawing from the world. In this weekend, we are offering the fearless confidence that there is nothing we need to hide from. Our spiritual path is intertwined with our society and our world. We can begin to embody the qualities of the Rigden in our own life, and make a difference in this world. We then proclaim this experience of confidence with the Shambhala Vow.

The weekend is a “graduation” and something of a rite of passage. By the end of the program, participants should have a sense of really “owning” the teachings in the Way of Shambhala. This is supported by making a connection with the central image on the shrine. They will receive a print of the Primordial Rigden thangka to create a shrine in their own home. Finally, they will officially become a Shambhalian by taking the Shambhala Vow. This is a large step that is both the culmination of an outer phase of their journey, and a gateway into the next phase where they will actually receive the terma. The Rigden weekend is reaching the eastern gateway of the Kingdom of Shambhala.

Each of the acharyas who teach this program will bring their own mind to the weekend. This short manual is a suggestion for the program, and is meant to inspire rather than constrain. Please do whatever feels best within this basic theme.

Teacher's Reading:

The pith of this material is contained in condensed form in the "General Understanding" section of *Tiger Lion Garuda Dragon Glory*. Please contemplate pages 3 and 4.

See also Chapter 22 "East Great Confidence" and especially pages 172-175 of *Profound*.

Study the chapters "How to Rule" and "Universal Monarch" in *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*.

Study the final section of *Ruling Your World*, "The Confidence of Rulership"

What you will need to bring:

1. Acharya rakusu
2. Acharya conch seal, and red ink
3. Calligraphy pen
4. List of Shambhala Vow names (forthcoming)
5. Shambhala Vow preceptor manual

What the centers will need:

1. Make sure that centers have a copy of the video, "Realizing Confidence: The Making of the Primordial Rigden Thangka." See http://www.shambhala.org/about_rigden.php#RigdenIconography.
2. Order copies of the Shambhala Vow from Shambhala Media - <http://www.shambhalamedia.org/SearchResults.asp?Search=shambhala+vow>
3. Make sure that the coordinators have the watermark paper for writing aspirations (conch watermark) <http://shambhala.org/members/practice-study-resources/teacher-resources/shambhala-vows/>
4. And the watermark paper for the name calligraphies (Shambhala sun watermark, still to be produced).
5. Make sure centers have ordered enough Primordial Rigden prints for each participant.
6. And the color brochure describing the Primordial Rigden thangka

Threefold Logic for the Weekend:

Ground: The meditation experience of the Way of Shambhala (Shambhala Training Levels I-V and the WOS courses) provides the ground for experiencing unconditional confidence. The Rigden symbolizes unconditional confidence.

Path: Windhorse provides a wind of energy to act in the world with unconditional confidence.

Fruition: Confidently proclaim basic goodness by taking the Shambhala Vow. Realizing our nature as the Rigden and manifesting confidence.

Summary

Friday day: (optional) Shambhala Vow Name interviews

Friday Night Talk: Unconditional Confidence

Saturday Morning: Sit, Review the Way of Shambhala I, and introduce a three-step Windhorse practice.

Saturday Afternoon: Sit, introduce the Rigden and/or Shambhala Vow name interviews

Tea: Show 20 min. video: “Realizing Confidence: The Making of the Primordial Rigden Thangka.” See http://www.shambhala.org/about_rigden.php#RigdenIconography.

Saturday evening: Short talk on Shambhala Vow and Group discussion and/or dialogues on the Shambhala Vow

Sunday Morning:

Introduce the *Proclamation of Goodness* and the *Supplication to the Shambhala Lineage*. Review the Windhorse practice. Drala walk for windhorse practice, ideally out in nature.

Sunday Afternoon: Manifesting Confidence: Warrior Exchange and Visioning triads
Shambhala Vow and Concluding Ceremony

Note: This may be the first time students are meeting an acharya. Please connect students with the presence of the Sakyong, the lineage, and the power of the Scorpion Seal.

Friday Day: Optional Shambhala Vow Name Interviews

Each acharya will meet in advance with the Shambhala Centre to decide on the best approach to offering this weekend. In order to accommodate a variety of different situations, the acharya will have to decide whether to offer the name interviews on Friday before the opening talk, or whether the interviews can be included in the Saturday afternoon schedule. The most important information is the number of expected participants. If this will be a large program, it will be best to offer the interviews on Friday. If there are perhaps ten or less students, it should be possible to offer the interviews during the Saturday afternoon. Please discuss the options with the Director of Practice and Education, the local shastri, and/or the coordinator of the program.

If you choose to offer the name interviews on Friday day, we suggest that the coordinator communicate with all of the participants in advance and set up a clear schedule. The Shambhala Center could be open for a day of sitting and students could prepare for the weekend with a nyinthün. However, some students will have to work or may have other commitments. In those cases, the student could be given an hour-long time slot when they should plan to come to the center and sit to wait for the interview. They could come before work, during a lunch hour, or after work, for example. The coordinator will have to provide some kind of sign-up sheet, or online scheduling system. The acharya can work with the coordinator to set up a schedule that works well for everyone. There may be some students who are traveling to attend the program and will have to have their interview on Saturday. The Friday interview process could also be combined with interviews on Saturday for very large programs. See the “Shambhala Vow Manual” for information on the name interview process.

Friday Night: Unconditional Confidence

Ground: Unconditional, instead of reference points, ego, aggression and struggle
Path: Confidence, instead of doubt, fear, or hiding in cocoon
Fruition: Unconditional Confidence

The suggested purpose of the Friday night talk is to explain the purpose of the program and introduce the experiential meaning of the weekend—unconditional confidence. In a sense, this is beginning with the fruition. The logic is that we want to go directly to a relevant experience, rather than an abstract principle. Most participants will have some personal questions about confidence: What does it mean to be more confident in my work life, or in my relationships? How can I be more confident as an artist, or an activist? How can I be brave when the world is so unjust, aggressive, and frightening? How can I be confident when I have struggled for so long? How can I experience enough bravery to embody what I have learned here in Shambhala? etc.

For some students, their questions may arise from a feeling of fear, overwhelm, and lack of confidence. They may be looking for greater bravery in their life. For others, however, they may have created a false kind of confidence to cover over their fear. Here, a “conditional” confidence is part of the cocoon. Many people who appear confident and bold are actually quite trapped by a fake, habitual confidence. They have to work hard to manipulate themselves and others in order to produce or maintain this fake confidence. This can be exhausting, and lead to an overall feeling of not being genuine. We can address both of these patterns in relating to confidence: 1. Someone who tends towards being shy or withdrawn; or 2. Someone who tends towards “faking” a confident cocoon. Most of us use both strategies in different situations. This weekend is working with a very personal and accessible level of teaching that is directly relevant for our everyday life, our relationships, and our careers.

Working with our personal patterns around confidence allows a very direct way to teach egolessness. As soon as we begin to explore the conditional kinds of confidence that we rely on, we are seeing the patterns of ego. Ego would like to maintain itself and hold itself together. By withdrawing and hiding, ego thinks it is protecting itself. Or, by pumping up a fake kind of bravado, ego thinks it is protecting itself. This weekend is not a self-help approach to feel more certain of our selves. In fact, many self-help methods are precisely a way to convince our selves to be confident, as opposed to letting go of deception, one-upmanship, and manipulation. The state of the warrior is egoless, in the sense that it abides without needing to withdraw or be deceptive. This is the state of unconditional confidence. Here at the conclusion of the first phase of the Way of Shambhala, we are introducing a fruition state of warriorship and realization. It is possible to be free from ego. It is possible to abide in a relaxed state of being, free from aggression and competition. A state that is genuine, open, and infused with energy.

The meditative experience that culminates in Shambhala Training Level 5 provides students with the personal experience of simply being, without any technique or manipulation. This background training is necessary for students to have a glimpse of unconditional confidence. The principles and themes in the Heart of Warriorship and the Everyday Life courses provide the resources for trusting in confidence. The gentleness of the CIEL course reminds us that we can simply rest with humility and curiosity. The perkiness of the JIEL course describes the discipline and heart required for resting in confidence. FIEL explores the unconditional outrageousness beyond hope and fear that is necessary to abide in confidence. WIEL specifically works with the obstacle of hesitation and a deep sense of trust. All of this meditation and personal experience comes together in the simple state of unconditional confidence. Even if the students don't trust that they have "mastered" all of the above, we can help to encourage them and point out this experience of unconditional confidence. The dignities all come together in the Rigden: "He who has neither beginning nor end, who possesses the glory of Tiger Lion Garuda Dragon, who possesses the confidence beyond words." Just as in the Ground Lungta practice, where all of the colors of the dignities swirl together in the heart center, the qualities and experience of the dignities all come together in the Rigden principle.

The key is that we are transmitting the view that this confidence is already present. It is innate and natural. In other words, this weekend is a deeper communication of basic goodness. As *The Letter of the Black Ashe* states, there is a "confidence which is primordially free." In this weekend, we bring the Way of Shambhala path to a conclusion by encouraging students to "follow and delight in" this original confidence.

In this way we connect a profound principle at the heart of the terma, and at the highest level of Buddhist teaching, with a very personal and relevant aspect of our everyday life. This must be less about learning a distant principle, and more about our immediate experience, and how these teachings connect with daily life.

Finally, it is clear from all of the Shambhala terma texts that confidence is key to creating enlightened society. This weekend is not only about the individual experience of confidence. It is about training warriors who are working to create enlightened society. According to *The Letter of the Black Ashe*, the primary distinction between a good society of warriors and a society of cowards is the relationship to confidence. "When the confidence that was primordially free/ was followed and delighted in/ countless multitudes of warriors arose." However, "When fear and doubt occurred/ Towards the confidence which is primordially free/ countless multitudes of cowards arose." Out of this fear and doubt, violence, terror, plague, famine, and war arose. Out of the confidence, a good human society was created on this earth. Therefore, in this Rigden weekend, we are transmitting the view and methods of rediscovering the most basic human confidence. This is the seed of enlightened society itself.

Friday Night Talk

The Purpose of the Rigden Weekend:

Welcome students and explain the purpose:

1. To summarize and bring together the Way of Shambhala into a simple and powerful experience of unconditional confidence and introduce a Windhorse practice to connect with confidence in our daily life.
2. To introduce the Rigden as the embodiment of this confidence.
3. To proclaim confidence and basic goodness by taking the Shambhala Vow and formally becoming a Shambhalian.

Introducing the Context

It would be good to begin with the context of Shambhala Vision: Shambhala vision recognizes the basic goodness of all. Based on this view, our path is a way of being in the world and bringing benefit to our self, others, and society as a whole. We do not simply hide and take care of our own situation. Shambhala is a vision that unites personal and social transformation to create enlightened society. This will take unwavering confidence in light of the tremendous global challenges that we face.

Shambhala vision teaches that, in the face of the world's great problems, we can be heroic and kind at the same time. Shambhala vision is the opposite of selfishness. When we are afraid of ourselves, and afraid of the seeming threat the world presents, then we become extremely selfish. We want to build our own little nests, our own cocoons, so that we can live by ourselves in a secure way. But we can be much more brave than that.

—*Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*

What does this bravery feel like and look like in our ordinary lives? What does it mean to discover enough confidence to be of benefit to the challenges that we face on this planet, while at the same time remaining open, genuine, and inspired? How can we discover confidence that is not just self-protection or arrogance? This weekend responds to such questions.

Ground: Unconditional

Usually we seek confidence through holding on to our self, our reference points, our cocoons, our habitual hopes and fears, or our aggression. Unconditional confidence is the way of the warrior-ruler. Here, confidence comes from simply *being*, without pretense or fear.

It is important to understand what we mean by the confidence of the warrior. The warrior is not developing confidence in anything...In this case, the warrior has self-existing confidence. This means that he remains in a state of confidence free from competition and any notion of struggle. The warrior's confidence is unconditional. In other words, because he is undistracted by any cowardly thoughts the warrior can rest in an unwavering and wakeful state of mind, which needs no reference points whatsoever. —The Dörje Dradul, introduction to *The Superhuman Life of Gesar of Ling*

Define **unconditional**:

Synonyms: Primordial, basic, natural, open, genuine, beginningless, timeless, original.

Not the result of circumstances. Things as they are without being “for” or “against.” The ‘unconditional’ aspect of unconditional confidence has a sense of relaxation, rather than struggle.

“All conditionality comes from unconditionality,” *Collected Kalapa Assembly Transcripts* p. 317 “Unconditional means free from being subject to creation” *Collected Kalapa Assembly Transcripts* p. 327.

Note: This is similar to the first of the three qualities of the Great Eastern Sun: “radiating confidence peaceful.”

See the *Auto-Commentary* pg. 8

See also *Collected Kalapa Assembly Transcripts* pp. 114-115.

Also, be sure to study the sections on the Ultimate Court in *Profound*

Path: Confidence, Smiling at Fear

“Cowardice is turning the unconditional into a situation of fear by inventing reference points, or conditions of all kinds. But for the warrior, unconditionality does not have to be conditioned or limited. It does not have to be qualified as positive or negative, but it can be neutral—just as it is.”

—*Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* “The Universal Monarch”

We are often afraid of the openness of the unconditional, and therefore we experience fear. In Shambhala Training Level II and the Fearlessness in Everyday Life course, we learned to directly work with fear: “In order to experience fearlessness, it is necessary to experience fear.” We can learn to “smile at fear.”

Warriorship is a path of discovering our own bravery and confidence while still remaining open and genuine. This confidence does not cover-over and hide from fear. It is the confidence that comes from being genuine, gentle, daring, and willing to let go.

Define **confidence**:

In the Shambhala tradition, confidence does not mean having an aggressive façade of arrogance. It does not mean looking in the mirror and convincing yourself that you are confident. Confidence in Shambhala is genuine, natural, powerful, and free from reference points.

While discussing “Meek,” the Dörje Dradul writes, “Confidence is a natural state of awareness and mindfulness in the way he conducts his affairs.” *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*

While discussing “Inscrutable,” the Dörje Dradul writes, “The cultivation of inscrutability is to learn to be. It has been said that everyone possesses the potentiality to be confident. When we speak of confidence here we refer to enlightened confidence—not to confidence in something, but just to being *confident*. This confidence is unconditional. Inscrutability is a spark that is free from any analytic scheme.” *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*

Confidence is also a translation of *Ziji*:

“The Tibetan word for confidence is *ziji*. *Zi* means “shine” or “glitter,” and *ji* means “splendor” or “dignity,” and sometimes has the sense of “monolithic.” So *ziji* expresses shining out, rejoicing while remaining dignified.

Sometimes confidence means that, being in a choiceless state, you trust in yourself and use your savings, information, strength, good memory, and stiff upper lip, and you accelerate your aggression and tell yourself that you are going to make it. That is the way of amateur warriors...” *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* “Letting Go”

Ziji means that because the warrior is awake and confident, he or she manifest as brilliant and magnetizing. We’re drawn to someone who manifests this state of mind, which is completely absorbed and matured in basic goodness and the noble qualities, *yonten*.

Ashe and the four Dignities, pg. 9.

Ordinarily when we talk about confidence, we talk in terms of having developed confidence *in* something. You might say, “I have confidence in you,” or “I have confidence that the brakes in my car will not fail”—although in some cases they do! So that kind of confidence is conditional confidence, as you know.

Collected Kalapa Assembly Transcripts pg. 115

This kind of confidence contains gentleness, because the notion of fear does not arise; sturdiness, because in the state of confidence there is ever-present resourcefulness; and joy, because trusting in the heart brings greater sense of humor. This confidence can manifest as majesty, elegance, and richness in a person's life.

Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior,
"Letting Go" and *Tiger Lion Garuda Dragon Glory*,
pg. 4

Fruition: Unconditional Confidence

Then we have what's known as unconditional confidence. That state of confidence is the same as what we call head and shoulders, a general sense of being, the general sense of experience that we have in the practice of raising lungta. It is a sense of beingness almost, rather than having confidence as a qualifying statement...a situation of relaxation which is tinged with confidence. Because we have been able to relax and develop peace, therefore we are *so*. So there is no problem—just a state of being; just *so*." *Collected Kalapa Assembly Transcripts* pg. 115.

This confidence is symbolized by the Rigden, the central image on our shrine. We will explore the meaning of the Rigden over the course of the weekend.

Dialogue

Please offer a dialogue exercise, using the form used in the Way of Shambhala classes. At this point, students are used to the dialogue process and it has become a central aspect of their learning. After the talk, ask the students to get into groups of two or three. One or two students take a turn simply listening, and one student takes a turn talking. After 5-7 minutes, ring the *rin* and the next partner speaks. Ask them to talk about these questions for about 5-7 minutes each:

1. What do you ordinarily depend upon to feel confident? What are the "conditions" you rely on to feel confident?
2. What would it mean to be free of needing these conditions? What does unconditional confidence mean to you? What emotions arise as you consider living life with unconditional confidence?

Each student has a chance to respond to these questions, so the entire dialogue will take about 20-35 minutes. After everyone has a chance to talk and listen, the group of two or three can have an open conversation for a few minutes. **For more details on leading these dialogues, see the CIEL and JIEL manuals.**

After the dialogues come back for a group discussion. Explain the schedule of the rest of the weekend.

Saturday Morning: Review Way of Shambhala I and Windhorse Transmission

Ground:	Meditation and the Four Dignities: The Way of Shambhala
Path:	Rousing Windhorse
Fruition:	Radiating Confidence on the Spot

Sitting meditation. Review the Shambhala Training Level I-V meditation instruction as a guided meditation. (Whatever way you would like). The progression of meditation from Level I to V also corresponds to the progression of the Way of Shambhala classes: CIEL, JIEL, FIEL, WIEL.

Briefly review the basic themes of the Way of Shambhala I. This overview lays the ground to be able to rouse windhorse. That is, we bring together contentment, joy, fearlessness, and wisdom to rouse windhorse. It is important that the students have a basic sense of the path that they have already traveled. You can draw a lot of these themes from asking the students about their understanding and experience. The more that you can draw this out from the group wisdom of the audience, the better.

Meditation in Everyday Life

This course presented the logic of shamatha. Meditation practice is the ground of everything that we train in in Shambhala. Meditation can be part of our everyday life.

Contentment in Everyday Life

Contentment in Everyday Life (CIEL) introduced participants to the basis of the path of Shambhala Buddhism through the contentment, friendliness, and mindfulness of our emotional experience and activities. The emphasis was on “friendly to oneself” and the gentleness aspects of warriorship, both on and off the cushion. There were basic teachings on the 4 Noble Truths and working with emotions from the hinayana perspective. Students explored how to meet suffering with gentleness and mindfulness. This journey was encapsulated in the image of the tiger, moving gracefully and confidently through life without deception and speed. This connects with the first of the three step windhorse instruction—the ability to gently rest with what is arising in nowness.

Joy in Everyday Life

The Joy in Everyday Life (JIEL) course emphasized the transition from working only with our self to beginning to work with the world, and all beings. This simple movement corresponds to the transition from the hinayana discipline to the broad

mahayana path of awareness and compassion. Therefore participants explored the connection between the mahayana teachings of bodhichitta—awakened heart—and the inspiration and discipline of the perky lion. We also explored the trap of doubt, and being free from doubt. This in turn, invoked the joyful discipline of the perky snow lion, leaping in the high realms. This connects with the second of the three steps in raising windhorse—opening the heart to what is arising without a “joyful mind free from doubt.”

Fearlessness in Everyday Life

Fearlessness in Everyday Life explored fear and fearlessness. Through “making friends with fear” we learned to see fear as a gateway to fearlessness. We contemplated the reality of impermanence and death and explored our attachment to hopes and fears. We explored our emotions to discover that they are not solid and fixed. This led to a recognition of groundlessness and the space of emptiness: ultimate bodhichitta. The course was summarized in the image of the outrageous garuda, soaring in space beyond hope and fear. This connects with the third step of the windhorse practice—letting go and opening out fully.

Wisdom in Everyday Life

The inscrutable dragon plays in the space of vastness. The Wisdom in Everyday Life course explored the teachings on manifesting within space. It emphasized the principle of wisdom, knowledge and skilful action, or *prajna* and *upaya*. We explored the hesitation to actually engage our lives with warriorship. The principle teaching introduced sacred world and the luminosity that arises, inseparable from the space of emptiness: the Great Eastern Sun. This also connects with the third step of the windhorse practice—radiating out.

Ground Lungta

The Wisdom in Everyday Life course introduced the Ground Lungta practice. This practice brings together all of the dignities into a single form. At the conclusion of the Ground Lungta practice, the Sakyong writes:

“We visualize the orange tiger, the white lion, the red garuda, and the blue dragon dissolving into our heart center, into the Great Eastern Sun. We open our eyes, sit up, and imagine the warmth of the Great Eastern Sun expanding everywhere.’

You may choose to use this Ground Lungta practice, especially the theme of “Radiating,” as a bridge to introduce windhorse.

Windhorse Transmission

After this review, we have created the good container and context for rousing windhorse. Introduce a three-step windhorse transmission. Windhorse is the energy that arises from unconditional confidence and basic goodness.

The three-step windhorse transmission is a way to bring together the entire Way of Shambhala into an instant. Rousing windhorse is a sudden practice to connect directly with the contentment, meekness, and mindfulness of the tiger, the joy and perky energy of the lion, the fearlessness and outrageousness of the garuda, and the wisdom and inscrutability of the dragon. We can use this practice off the cushion, in everyday life, thus bringing the teachings directly into our world.

This is the first windhorse *practice* that students have received. They have been introduced to the *principle* of windhorse in the Joy in Everyday Life (see class one in particular) and the Wisdom in Everyday Life courses, as well as the Ground Lungta practice. However, this simple transmission does not replace the depth of the five-step windhorse transmission that will be received and studied in the Windhorse weekend of the Sacred Path. The three-step transmission is an introduction to a sudden practice. This sense of opening to windhorse in a flash is a way to condense all of the themes that students have been studying and practicing into a non-conceptual instant. We are offering a practice that is eminently practical: we can rouse windhorse on the spot in the midst of our life.

The principle of Windhorse should be defined and explained; here especially in relationship to the confident activity that is required to be involved with the complexities of our daily lives. Windhorse is the experience of energy that provides freshness, strength, and confidence to engage the challenges of our life and in our world. Windhorse is how unconditional confidence manifests. It is also a *practice* that we can learn in order to rouse our unconditional confidence.

Everyone has experienced a wind of energy or power in their lives. For example, athletes feel a surge of energy when they are engaged in their sport. Or a person may feel a torrent of love or passion for another human being to whom he or she is attracted. Sometimes, we feel a cool breeze of delight rather than a strong wind. For example, when you are hot and perspiring, if you take a shower, you feel so delightfully cool and energized at the same time.

Normally, we think this energy comes from a definite source or has a particular cause. We associate it with the situation in which we became so energized. Athletes may become addicted to their sport because of the “rush” they experience. Some people become addicted to falling in love over and over again because they feel so good and alive when they are in love... [However, we can] discover a bank of self-existing energy that is always available to you—beyond any circumstance. It actually comes from nowhere, but is always there. It is the energy of basic goodness. This self-existing energy is called *windhorse* in the Shambhala teachings. *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*, “Letting Go”

Wind refers to the moving, living energy of basic goodness and our life. The energy of basic goodness can be felt as strong and vital. We can feel it in our bodies and in our perceptions as well as in our state of mind.

Horse refers to the fact that we can ride this energy. We can learn to stay with it. We can ride or utilize the energy of our emotions, our circumstances, our body, and our perceptions. We can discover that certain activities, disciplines, and activities can rouse this energy in our life, whereas other activities block or hinder this energy. Through discipline and skill, we can ride our life instead of it riding us.

Windhorse Transmision:

Three Step Windhorse:

1. Gently touch present experience “be present”
 2. Feel the heart and soften “be genuine”
 3. Radiate out “let go and radiate”
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1. Touching the present experience is related to the gentle mindfulness of the Meek tiger, studied in Contentment in Everyday Life. We do not have to aggressively struggle with what is arising. We can stay with the present, without wandering. Further, in the Fearlessness in Everyday Life course, we trained in being beyond hope and fear. To “hold present experience” is to be present, without hoping for something else, or fearing what is arising. This is a sense of “feeling heaven and earth.” We feel our body, our emotions, and our circumstances and environment. We then “hold” that or “touch” that for a moment, just sense it fully, “be present.”
 2. When we stay with what arises with a sense of genuineness, the heart can soften. We can let go of aggression and struggle. This may bring a sense of openness or sadness. We can soften the heart. This is related to the opening of the heart that we explored in the Joy in Everyday Life course. It is also a sense of “Being genuine.”
 3. Being fully present with a sense of genuineness and softness, we come in contact with the unconditional well-spring of basic goodness. We touch the energy bank of windhorse. This is not the result of manipulating our experience. Rather, this windhorse is already present. We are simply staying present and open enough to release the energy that is already contained in all of our experience. We touch this potency, let go of conceptual mind, and then radiate out, expanding in all directions. Confidence shines out from the heart.

Review the practice over and over again, many times. It may be helpful to ask students to try it standing, sitting, moving around, etc. Try asking students to picture a challenging situation in their life. Imagine being in that situation, and move through the three steps... Have a group discussion and Q+A about the windhorse practice.

Lunch

Saturday Afternoon: The Rigden: Symbol of Unconditional Confidence

If you are conducting Shambhala Vow name interviews during this afternoon, arrange the schedule to allow for a long period of sitting and interviews before this talk.

Note: It is possible to leave most of this afternoon open for sitting meditation and guided 3-step windhorse practice. The talk about the universal monarch and the Rigden could be long, or short. Please connect this talk with the theme of unconditional confidence and the dialogues from the Friday night experience.

Ground: Windhorse and the Experience of Unconditional Goodness
Path: Free from Reference Points
Fruition: The Birth of the Universal Monarch, the Primordial Rigden

NOTE: Use the chapter "The Universal Monarch" from Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior as the basis for this talk. This logic will lead to a presentation of the Rigden. See also Tiger Lion Garuda Dragon Glory, "Commentary on the Homage," pg. 6

It would be good to begin with sitting. Review the three-step windhorse instruction and ask for any questions that students have. Then, present the meaning of the universal monarch.

Ground: Windhorse and The Experience of Unconditional Goodness

From of the experience of sitting meditation and rousing windhorse, we can let go, rest in confidence, and have a glimpse of unconditional goodness in our life.

"The fruition of the warrior's path is the experience of primordial goodness, or the complete unconditioned nature of basic goodness. This experience is the same as the complete realization of egolessness, or the truth of non-reference point."

Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior, "The Universal Monarch"

"One of my teachers once said to me, "What is the difference between the Buddha and ourselves? The Buddha has complete confidence in basic goodness. He knows from direct experience that basic goodness is here, whether we have confidence in it or not. We are all awake, loving, brilliantly-alive beings. We have the wisdom and compassion of a universal monarch lying within us like dormant seeds waiting for the sun. We think we're 180 degrees from enlightenment, but we are only a few degrees off."

Ruling Your World, pg. 28

Path: Space, Free from Reference Points

Conditional confidence, and a false sense of security, comes from not trusting in basic goodness. Therefore, we struggle to establish a cocoon of secure reference points in order to feel confident. We look for confidence through creating something, believing in something or someone, or hoping for something. We develop varying habitual attempts to create confidence. When these conditions are not present, we feel fear or disheartenment. We feel that we need to manipulate things in order to be confident. Unconditional confidence comes from freedom from such reference points, even the reference points of our own cocoon—our own sense of self. Because we have experienced and trust in basic goodness, we can be comfortable in the space, free from reference points. This comes from wakefulness in our everyday life.

The discovery of non-reference point, however, comes only from working with the reference points that exist in your life. By reference point here, we simply mean all of the conditions and situations that are part of your journey through life...

The warrior, fundamentally, is someone who is not afraid of space. The coward lives in constant terror of space... Cowardice is turning the unconditional into a situation of fear by inventing reference points, or conditions of all kinds. But for the warrior, unconditionality does not have to be conditioned or limited. It does not have to be qualified as positive or negative, but it can be neutral—just as it is.

The setting-sun world is afraid of space, afraid of the truth of non-reference point. In that world, people are afraid to be vulnerable... But what are you really protecting yourself from? *Space*... The challenge of warriorship is to step out of the cocoon, to step out into space, by being brave and at the same time gentle.

—*Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* “The Universal Monarch”

Fruition: The Birth of the Universal Monarch

You can be completely raw and exposed with your husband or your wife, your banker, your landlord, anyone that you meet. Out of that comes an extraordinary birth: the birth of the universal monarch. The Shambhala definition of a monarch is someone who is very raw and sensitive, willing to open his or her heart to others. That is how you become a king or queen, the ruler of your world. The way to rule the universe is to expose your heart, so that others can see your heart beating, see your red flesh, and see the blood pulsating through your veins and arteries.

Ordinarily we think of a king in the negative sense, as someone who holds himself apart from others, hiding in the palace and creating a kingdom to shield

himself from the world. Here we are speaking of opening yourself to other human beings in order to promote human welfare. The monarch's power, in the Shambhala world, comes from being very soft...

This is the fruition of warriorship, the complete primordial realization of basic goodness. —*Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* “The Universal Monarch”

The Primordial Rigden:

The Primordial Rigden symbolizes the principle of the universal monarch. This is the image in the center of our shrine. Primordial refers to “unconditional.”

Rigden is a Tibetan word for the rulers of the Kingdom of Shambhala (*Kalki* in Sanskrit). There are traditionally 25 Rigden Kings. These are dharma-kings who rule from the view of basic goodness. The story of Dawa Sangpo requesting teachings from the Buddha would be helpful here. See *Ruling Your World*, pp. 1-2.

This thangka painting was envisioned by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. It is not of one specific Rigden, but the Primordial Rigden, the essence of unconditional confidence and basic goodness itself. Rigden (*rigs ldan*) literally means, “holder of the family.” The Rigden holds or protects the family of basic goodness. This includes all beings, without exception. You do not have to be of a certain religious background, race, class, gender, age etc. The Rigden holds, protects, and embraces the basic goodness of all.

The Rigden is the image of a being who is completely unconditional. This is why it is the **Primordial** Rigden. “He who has neither beginning nor end.” At the same time, the Rigden is not a symbol for a mendicant who removes themselves from the world. The Rigden, is *in* the world. This takes tremendous **confidence** in basic goodness. The Rigden is adorned with brocade and flowing cloth, and is fully-ornamented. There is a sense of richness and appreciation and activity.

Suggested Teaching Tool: *You might experiment with inviting groups of 2 or 3 students to go up to the shrine and look at the thangka for a few moments in silence. Try to get a feeling for the symbolism. Look into the Rigden's eyes.*

The Rigden Iconography

“The Primordial Rigden sits in an attitude of royal ease: upright, open, alert and relaxed, a state of awareness beyond meditation and post-meditation. The robes and jewelry are richly elegant, and their colors signify the aspects of enlightenment. Wearing such clothing and accessories indicates that the Rigden has not renounced the phenomenal world, nor is he threatened by it. The Rigden rules the world of sensation, rather than being trapped in it.

The Rigden's hands form the mudra “turning the dharma wheel” (dharmachakramudra, Skt.) The dharmachakra dates from the earliest representations of the Buddha and refers

to his first teachings at Deer Park. In his life, the Buddha initiated three major revolutions of the dharma wheel. The mudra thus also implies the continually evolving, up-to-date nature of the teachings.

The Rigden's throne is supported by snow lions. Tigers, dragons and a garuda also make their appearances in the thangka. Taken together as a group – tiger, lion, garuda, dragon – the animals are known as the “Four Dignities” of Shambhala warriorship. They represent sequential stages of training and accomplishment: meek, perky, outrageous and inscrutable. The garuda above the Rigden's head stands for a vast view, the ultimate view, like an eagle commands. The text on the banner reads “Profound, Brilliant, Just, Powerful, All-Victorious.” This list comprises the traditional qualities of a Sakyong.

At the top of the painting sits Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha. Although he chose a humble presentation for himself and his sangha, the Buddha fits perfectly in a picture of enlightened rulership. He was of royal birth, and had many kings and queens among his friends, followers and patrons. The Buddha predicted that in the future dark age – (many believe we are now living in that age) – the teachings of Shambhala and the rigdens would appear, to rejuvenate the practice of wisdom and compassion. It is thus in his role as founder and source of the transmission that the Buddha appears at the highest point in the painting.”

See the beautiful color brochure on the Rigden Thangka for further details on the symbolism. You may plan to distribute these brochures after the talk.

See also *Adhisthana*, for more of the Sakyong's teachings on the Primordial Rigden.

Tea Break: “Realizing Confidence Video”

During the tea break, show the 20 minute video, “Realizing Confidence: The Making of the Primordial Rigden Thangka.” See http://www.shambhala.org/about_rigden.php#RigdenIconography.

Saturday Evening: Group Discussion or Discussion Groups on the Shambhala Vow

The Saturday evening should be a time to discuss and reflect on the Shambhala Vow. Please begin by distributing copies of the Shambhala Vow for students to read and contemplate for a few minutes before the discussion.

How are students feeling about the Vow? Are there any remaining questions or doubts? Offer a circle, dialogues in pairs or threesomes, or an open group discussion. With a large group you may want to have discussion groups led by ADs.

Sunday Morning: Experiencing the Richness of Space

Begin Sunday morning by introducing the “Proclamation of Goodness and “The Supplication to the Shambhala Lineage.” This is the first time that we formally introduce chanting as a practice. Please discuss chanting and liturgy as a practice:

- Synchronizes body and mind
- Sacred relationship with words and meaning
- Invoking the view and meaning in an energetic way
- Chanting as a way to wake up our windhorse
- The Proclamation of Goodness: simply and directly reminds us of the view of basic goodness
- The Supplication: honors the ancestor warriors who have come before us and who have transmitting basic goodness and confidence through hard work, skill, and compassion. Especially emphasize that the chant begins with the Primordial Rigden, and then concludes by reminding us that “our nature” is the profound, brilliant Rigden.”

Sit.

After some time, offer a further review of the three-step windhorse practice. After a practice session, go outside and practice raising windhorse outdoors for an extended period. Time permitting, you may choose to ask everyone to travel to a “drala spot:” somewhere beautiful and natural near the Shambhala Center. This could be a park, a spot by a river, a garden, a lake, a mountain, or the ocean. **Before arriving at the center where you are teaching the weekend, contact the center leaders who invited you and ask them to find such a place.** Ideally, there would be enough space for everyone to be able to aimlessly wander and sit with some privacy. This place does not have to be perfect, but try to find somewhere that will be somewhat quiet, natural, alive, and wakeful. A center that has a garden in the back, or a lawn out front would be perfectly good.

Instructions:

Upon arriving outside, or at the drala spot, wander around alone and silent, until you find a place that feels magnetizing to you. Then sit for a while, and do the three-step windhorse practice. Rest in the space and enjoy your perceptions of sacred world. Repeat this a few times, enjoying the energies of the land and experimenting with resting in space. One of the aspirations is to experience what it is like for the natural world to support your experience of confidence.

After an hour or two of this practice, have lunch and return to the center for the final afternoon.

Sunday Afternoon:

Students should have received instructions to bring formal attire and dress up for the Sunday afternoon Shambhala Vow Ceremony.

Sit

After an extended period of sitting, you may choose to lead a concluding exercise before the Shambhala Vow Ceremony.

Two options (you may want to do both if you can, some may even choose to replace the Sunday morning drala walk with one of these activities):

1. Warrior Exchange: Some acharyas have had success with offering Warrior Exchanges. This is an opportunity for students to be on the spot and review their learning. This is both a practice of confidence and a teaching method to bring the Way of Shambhala to a strong conclusion. There is also a sense of a gentle “test” as part of the right of passage or graduation quality. Questions are prepared in advance, printed out, and cut into strips. Then students draw the questions out in the traditional form.
2. Dialogue on Visioning: Give a brief talk about manifesting as the Rigden. Return to the basic theme of engaging with the world with confidence, and working to create enlightened society. Then get into groups of three. Each student speaks for 5-7 minutes about the question:
 - i. What is your vision? If you lived with unconditional confidence, what do you aspire to offer the world? Is there a vision or a project that you have always wanted to be part of, or initiate? If money, time constraints, and other not issues, what do you want to be a part of to create a better world? (5-7 minutes each)
 - ii. Now take a moment to reflect on the obstacles, fear, challenges, and issues that you would face; what feel in your way? (5-7 minute dialogue, or if time is short, you can simply ask students to contemplate this question)
 - iii. Finally, talk about what you have learned in the Way of Shambhala or this weekend on Unconditional Confidence that could help to manifest this vision in your life. What support and allies do you have in the world to manifest with confidence?

Come back together as a group to hear from the students experience and have a concluding discussion.

Break to prepare and set up for the Shambhala Vow Ceremony

[See Shambhala Vow Ceremony preceptor's instructions]

Brief Summary of Shambhala Vow Ceremony

Preparations

1. The shrine master sets up the shrine hall with the help of the sound crew. The following items are needed:
 - microphone for the preceptor
 - bowl of rice and gong on the side table by the preceptor's chair
 - lhasang tray
 - Shambhala Vow Names in order
 - Rigden thanka prints to distribute with the names
2. Be sure that the preceptor's seal and red ink are on hand, and that the sealer is present two hours before the vow. The seal should be stamped in the lower right corner of the preceptor's calligraphy, just slightly touching the calligraphy.
3. The calligrapher should be present at least two hours before the vow in order to do any additional calligraphy. The calligrapher checks his or her work for errors before the preceptor signs the documents.
4. The master of ceremonies gives a short talk on ceremony protocol and order of events.

The master of ceremonies gives a talk on the sequence of the ceremony before the preceptor enters. Use the following outline. Announce to the audience that all are welcome to witness the ceremony. However, only those taking the vow do prostrations and repeat the Shambhala Vow formula. Participants should sit on zabutons, with gomdens, zafus, or chairs, in the front of the meditation hall.

Composed by the Sakyong:

“The process of taking the vow should not be overly burdened. Rather than a feeling of heaviness, there should be enthusiasm and delight. At the same time, the ceremony should have an air of seriousness and poignancy, since what the future warriors are about to do is somewhat monumental. The vow depends a great deal on the attitude and wholeheartedness of the individual. Taking the vow should be regarded as individuals rising up to acknowledge the sun, rather than lying down

and expecting the sun to acknowledge them.

Ideally, the vow should be offered in a place where the Shambhala tradition is strong. It should be offered in a clean space with good light and ventilation, which creates an inspirational environment. The participants should wear good clothing and be well groomed—acknowledgments of nonaggression. They should also feel humble, as if glimpsing a great mountain.

The ceremony should take place before a shrine representing the Shambhala lineage.

1. All will read the *Proclamation of Goodness* three times
2. Conduct a short lhasang. This could be as simple as offering some juniper.
3. The preceptor will lead a short meditation on basic goodness, after which they will speak briefly on basic goodness and what it means to take the Shambhala Vow. Connect with the teachings of unconditional confidence.
4. The future Shambhalians will rise and perform two deep warrior standing bows, which represent heaven and earth, as well as the father and mother lineages.
5. The participants will have contemplated habitual patterns they aspire to purify and commitments and virtues they aspire to accomplish. Pause at this point for individuals to write these down on the white pieces of paper provided by the centre. These will be offered to the shrine as they go up and receive their names and the Rigden thankas.
 - After the ceremony, these should be sent to the Kalapa Court and presented to the Sakyong along with the names of everyone who took the vow.
6. After the participants have written their words of intention, they should take warrior posture. All read the homage.
7. The warriors make one deep bow (seated, as for a talk) before receiving the vow.
8. The warrior preceptor reads the vow three times, first for heaven, next for earth, and then for humanity.
9. After the final recitation, the warrior preceptor initiates the warrior's cry, with everyone proclaiming KI KI SO SO three times. [This is the moment the Vow is transmitted, like snapping fingers in refuge???)
10. Then all the warriors rest in that space and feel the blessings of the Shambhala lineage, the Sakyong and the Sakyong Wangmo, and all the great and awake traditions of the world.

11. After a few moments, in order to acknowledge what has occurred, they all make another deep warrior bow (seated). When they arise, they should do so with the confidence that basic goodness is firmly in their hearts.
12. Next the new warriors read the commitment.
13. ??? At this point, the new Shambharians stand and receive their names and the Rigden thangka print.
 - Both are passed through the lhasang by the assistant and handed to the preceptor, who bows and hands them to the new Shambharians
 - One by one, they return to their seats
14. After all are seated, all read the verses of celebration.
15. After that, all read the lines celebrating enlightened society.
16. The ceremony concludes with the preceptor reciting the auspicious verses and tossing rice. All recite the Shambhala dedication of merit.

Concluding Talk: Manifesting Confidence

Congratulate the new Shambharians and Bring the Rigden Weekend to a close with a brief concluding talk:

Ground: Review what arose during the weekend

- We brought together the Way of Shambhala into a simple and powerful experience of unconditional confidence
- We introduced a Windhorse practice to connect with this confidence in our daily life.
- We introduced the Rigden as the embodiment of this confidence.
- And now we have proclaimed this confidence and basic goodness by taking the Shambhala Vow.

Path: Support to go forward on the Path and Reconnect with Unconditional Confidence

- Next steps on the path
 - Receiving the terma teachings in the Sacred Path
 - Good time to consider daththün
 - Begin to contemplate moving towards Enlightened Society Assembly
 - A local leader could announce specific dates etc.
- Creating a shrine at home, if you choose:

- Create a simple but beautiful space where you place the Rigden thankas as a reminder of the entire Way of Shambhala and the teachings of unconditional confidence, as well as the proclamation of goodness in the Shambhala Vow
- Meeting the Sakyong

If students have not yet had the opportunity, it would be good to try to meet the Sakyong at this point in their journey. Sakyong means “earth protector” and Sakyong Wangmo means “lady earth protector.” They are the leaders of Shambhala. They practice living based upon these principles of unconditional confidence. They embody the qualities of the Rigden. The Sakyong was raised by the Dörje Dradul as a prince, and then empowered as the Sawang. See pages 172-173 of *Ruling Your World*.

These human beings have worked tirelessly to embody the principles of unconditional confidence and enlightened rulership.

Encourage students to meet the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo, if they have not already. There will be an annual Sangha Retreat that is a way to meet the Sakyong. In these retreats, students will have an opportunity to hear him teach for a week, as well as experience a meeting with the Sakyong in a smaller group. Announce the next Sangha Retreat.

Fruition: Manifesting Confidence and Social Vision

Further, the important point is not just to look to these teachers, but to embody these teachings ourselves, in our own lives. *We* have to be the Rigden, *we* have to be the Sakyong and the Sakyong Wangmo and live our lives with unconditional confidence. The world desperately needs human beings who have experienced a glimpse of unconditional confidence and goodness and are able to transform their personal situations into wakefulness, compassion, and dignity.

The entire context of everything that we have experienced this weekend is the vision of creating enlightened society. Shambhala joins personal and social transformation to create enlightened society. We rouse our windhorse and rediscover unconditional confidence in order to be of profound benefit to the world. We can bring these teachings into all aspects of our life, the work we are already doing, and possibly take further steps. In the Shambhala teachings, confidence is the key to creating enlightened society.

On the other hand, we do not mean to say that once the warrior has uncovered his innate confidence there is nothing left for him to do. In many ways, the path of the warrior is very similar to the Buddhist notion of the bodhisattva path of selfless action. The bodhisattva is a practitioner who isn't satisfied with the possibility of liberating himself from the pain of samsara, but heroically commits himself not to rest until he has helped save all sentient beings. In the same way the confident warrior does not simply feel proud of having seen the nature of his

cocoon and stepped out of it. He cannot rest in any sense of smugness at his achievement, or even in the sense of freedom and relief itself. Rather his understanding and personal experience of the claustrophobia of cowardly mind serve as an inspiration for the warrior to free others as well as himself. He actually cannot ignore the suffering and depression he sees in those around him. So, from his unconditional confidence, spontaneous compassion naturally arises.

Foreward to *The Superhuman Life of Gesar of Ling*

Conclude with encouragement to continue on the journey of warriorship.

Some of these students have the potential to enjoy the fearless simplicity of the Scorpion Seal. Others will never take another program in the center again, but will take what they have learned into their lives. As much as possible, welcome them into the world of warriorship.

Invitation for membership:

The Sakyong would like the fruition of this weekend to include an invitation for membership. We are working to create a simple and genuine invitation. If you feel so inspired, please explain the meaning of being a member at the center and ask participants to consider becoming a member at this time. The center Director could be present to make some remarks.

Conclude with a delicious and rich celebration.

May all beings enjoy profound, brilliant, glory!