
The Rigden Shrine

The main shrines of our centers will change to Rigden shrines. The new shrine combines both familiar and new elements.

Note: This is a sketch. Colors are approximations.



The basic Rigden shrine, in this first phase of development, will include:

- A framed print of the Primordial Rigden thangka, flanked by portraits of the Druk Sakyong Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche.
 - Elevated on riser box: crystal ball, and sacred text on a stand or box behind the crystal ball.
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- Candles, flowers, seven water offering bowls. Reliquaries may be placed on the shrine or preferably on a separate table in the shrine room).
- New gold-colored painted or brocade backdrop, shrine box brocade (not shown), and new shrine box and platform colors.
- An incense table is not required, but some centers place a low incense table in front of the shrine, or they place a standing incense burner off to one side in front of the shrine.

Several other items are being designed and produced to enrich this basic shrine, and may be added to the basic shrine piece by piece in the future. These include:

- New banners to flank the shrine.
- Great Eastern Sun medallion high over the center of the shrine (golden sun disk with rays).
- A crystal wish- fulfilling jewel will replace the crystal ball as the representation of mind or dharmakaya.
- A Tibetan calligraphy edition of *The Golden Sun of the Great East* will replace the text as the representation of speech or sambogakaya.
- A stupa will represent body or nirmanakaya.
- Pattra for crown molding and shrine box ornamentation (the Tibetan gold-leafed curlicue ornamentation that we have on the main shrines in our larger centers).
- A gold-leafed medallion for the front of the shrine box (will likely be crossed vajras with an ashe in the center).

About the Primordial Rigden

The Primordial Rigden embodies the magical heart of Shambhala, the brilliant and peaceful presence of basic goodness and enlightened leadership. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, the leader of Shambhala, designed the Primordial Rigden thangka to be placed on shrines in Shambhala Centers throughout the world.

He was pointing to the unique spiritual inheritance of the Shambhala community—an inheritance that braids together the Buddhist lineages descending from the Buddha (seated above the head of the Primordial Rigden), including the Shambhala wisdom the Buddha imparted to Dawa Sangpo, the first rigden or sovereign of the Kingdom of Shambhala.

Dawa Sangpo, upon meeting the Buddha, requested teachings that would allow him to practice fully as a Buddhist, but to continue to fulfill his responsibilities as a secular ruler and family man. In response, the Buddha taught the Kalachakra Tantra. It is said that Dawa Sangpo immediately grasped the profundity of the transmission.

Returning to Shambhala, he propagated the practice of the Kalachakra, establishing magnificent parks and temples dedicated to the purpose. The power of this practice, embraced by everyone in the kingdom, is said to have contributed to the enduring reputation of Shambhala as a model of enlightened society.

The Primordial Rigden represents this enlightened essence—which is our inherent nature as well.

Creation of the Primordial Rigden Thangka

Cynthia Moku, master thangka painter, worked closely with Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche to capture his vision of the Primordial Rigden.

After months of preliminary drawings, interviews, and meetings with the Sakyong, Cynthia spent nearly eight hours a day over a period of ten months executing the composition and iconography they had discussed.

The original thangka now hangs in Kalapa Valley, Nova Scotia. It measures 760mm x 990mm. It is antique silk mounted on cotton canvas. To achieve the unique and vibrant colors we see, the artist ground and mixed her own pigments in the traditional method used by generations of thangka painters.