

# The Shambhala Ngöndro

## Practice and Study for the Coming Year (04/05)

*The Primordial Rigden, The Magical Heart of Shambhala*, was composed by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche at Shambhala Mountain Center during the 2004 Vajrayana Seminary. This text presents a Shambhala ngöndro that will now serve as the entrance into the practice and study of the vajrayana for our Shambhala community. In addition, it is the preliminary practice for receiving the *Werma Sadhana* — now the first main sadhana a tantrika will receive after seminary. As taught by both the Vidyadhara and the Sakyong, the unity of the vajrayana buddhist teachings and the Shambhala terma are now the central path of our Shambhala buddhist community.

Students will receive the *Werma Sadhana* within the context of the Rigden abhisheka. The first of these will take place in mid-August 2004, at Shambhala Mountain Center. The Sakyong warmly invites all vajrayana students who have ever attended a Vajrayana Seminary to take part in this abhisheka, and to practice the Shambhala ngöndro in preparation for it.

The Sakyong has emphasized that by introducing the Shambhala ngöndro, he is not removing anything from the vajrayana path. We will still practice the Kagyü ngöndro leading to Vajrayogini and Chakrasamvara sadhana practices, for which abhishekas are planned for late August and mid-July 2005 respectively. The main change is that the Sakyong would like the community to practice the Shambhala ngöndro and the *Werma Sadhana* first, before engaging in the Kagyü and/or Nyingma ngöndros and sadhanas. He envisions that, in time, the Shambhala ngöndro and the *Werma Sadhana* will be the binding factor for our whole vajrayana community.

### **Shambhala Practitioners Who Have Not Attended Vajrayana Seminary**

There are many people who are committed to the Shambhala path who have not attended a vajrayana Seminary. The Shambhala ngöndro is a practice that is based on the pre-requisites of refuge and bodhisattva vows and vajrayana transmission. Those Shambhala practitioners who are buddhist or other students who wish to explore that path are invited to speak with a senior meditation instructor or acharya to discuss how to go forward. We are also working on clarifying the practice path of Shambhala students who may choose not to attend a future vajrayana Seminary.

### **Receiving the Shambhala Ngöndro**

Any tantrika who has attended Vajrayana Seminary and wishes to practice the Shambhala ngöndro should first watch the videotape of the initial presentation of this practice at the 2004 Vajrayana Seminary. Watching the video is not an authorization to begin the practice, therefore, one should next receive a lung (reading transmission) *in person* from an acharya. If there is no acharya living nearby or coming to visit within a reasonable time, a center or group may request the Office of Practice and Education to designate a senior teacher to give the lung to local tantrikas.

### **Beginning Shambhala Ngöndro Practice**

After receiving the lung, you may order the ngöndro text from Vajradhatu Publications and begin the practice. Ideally, these lungs will be given in the context of a ngöndro weekend, during which ngöndro meditation instructors and practitioners could learn and engage in the practice together. Vajradhatu Publications will be ready to receive orders for both the text and accompanying instructions by the end of October 2004. (902-421-1550 ext. 1 or [www.shambhalashop.com](http://www.shambhalashop.com))

Tantrikas already engaged in another ngöndro or sadhana practice and who have attended Vajrayana Seminary, are welcome to begin the Shambhala ngöndro. We recommend that tantrikas meet with their meditation instructors to discuss how to work with the various practices they have and will receive.

### **Intensive Group Practice and Ngöndro Dathun**

As stated in *The Primordial Rigden: The Magical Heart of Shambhala*

*“This practice is divided into outer, inner, and secret. Counting is not necessary, but if you choose, you are free to recite 100,000 mantras. This practice is meant to be accomplished at a gathering of Shambhala warriors over a period of one month. Its purpose is to galvanize those warriors and foster friendship, camaraderie, and celebration thus mixing practice with life. This will increase personal windhorse and invigorate the windhorse of the group, giving power and potency to the vision of Shambhala.”*

Traditionally, students can practice according to numbers, time, or signs of realization. The Sakyong has decided that this Shambhala ngöndro can be done either by time or by numbers. Practicing by time emphasizes the quality of the practitioner’s engagement in the practice rather than the quantity of recitations.

The Sakyong is strongly emphasizing the importance and power of group vajrayana practice. A new intensive group practice program, a month-long ngöndro dathun, is being introduced to provide an opportunity for students to practice together. These programs will be led by acharyas at our practice centers. Participants will spend a week focusing on each of the four ngöndro practices. There will be about six to eight hours of practice each day in addition to time for study, talks, and celebratory events. The point of these gatherings is both to accomplish the ngöndro as well as to live, study, and work together as a group, deepening our understanding of how to create an uplifted and sane society.

If you cannot do an entire month, you are strongly encouraged to attend at least two consecutive weeks of a ngöndro dathun at a practice center. For the remaining two weeks, you could participate in group intensives at local or practice centers for periods of one weekend or more. These local group intensives will be led by senior ngöndro instructors who have received the lung and are experienced in the Shambhala teachings and ngöndro. (see below)

### **Daily Practice**

Daily practice is one of the most important aspects of our path. Understanding our practice and practicing regularly is what mixes the practice with our everyday life. Therefore, the Sakyong has given guidelines for how the ngöndro can be done in sessions of as little as 30 minutes or as long as two or more hours. These times can be adjusted to suit one’s personal situation. Further instructions on how to do daily practice will be communicated at the time of the lungs. As further practice questions arise, please contact the Shambhala Office of Practice and Education. ([jscott@shambhala.org](mailto:jscott@shambhala.org))

At Seminary, students were empowered to practice all four of the ngöndro practices. The Sakyong instructed them to look at their schedules for the coming year and decide how they could divide their time so that when they join their group intensive, they will have become familiar with the ngöndros to be practiced as a group. For example, someone who has eight months before attending a ngöndro dathun could devote approximately two months to each of the practices.

### **Tantrikas Who Are Warrior Assembly Graduates**

Those tantrikas who have attended Vajrayana Seminary and Kalapa Assembly and received the *Werma Sadhana* are warmly invited to take part in the Rigden abhisheka. This abhisheka is also an empowerment to eventually engage in the Scorpion Seal retreat, the culmination of our Shambhala Buddhist path and our unique inheritance from the Vidyadhara. The Sakyong has asked that even current practitioners of the *Werma Sadhana* prepare themselves in the customary way to enter the abhisheka mandala — by practicing the ngöndro individually and taking part in any of the group formats from weekends to part or all of a ngöndro dathun. (More details to follow.)

### **Practicing Different Ngondros Together**

The practices of Shambhala ngöndro contain essentially the same components as other ngöndros: refuge and prostrations, bodhichitta practice, Vajrasattva mantra, mandala offering and guru yoga. Although tantrikas at any given center may be practicing different liturgies (i.e. Shambhala, Kagyü, Nyingma), we encourage you to practice together, reciting the various liturgies in silence or semi-audibly.

### **Ngöndro Instructors**

Current ngöndro instructors are qualified to advise students who will be practicing the Shambhala ngöndro. However, instructors do need to receive the lung and should familiarize themselves with the view, content, and practice of the Shambhala ngöndro. Instructors should try to attend a local or regional group intensive. In this way, instructors can receive the lung and practice and discuss this with other ngöndro instructors.

Central to understanding this text are the Shambhala teachings on Rigden principle, the four dignities, lungta and stroke practice, and the teachings on Ashe. Ngöndro instructors not currently familiar with the root texts and practices of Shambhala are encouraged to make the Shambhala teachings a focus of study and to connect with their center's Sacred Path program and Warrior Assembly.

### **Preparation for Shambhala Seminary**

The Vajrayana Seminary will now be called the Shambhala Seminary. The first is scheduled from July 12 to August 10, 2005 at Shambhala Mountain Center. This first Shambhala Seminary will be unique in that it will serve as an introduction to vajrayana as well as a ngöndro intensive for new and returning seminarians. Those students who will be attending seminary for the first time will complete approximately two weeks of their group ngöndro requirement during Seminary. Even though they will not have completed their ngöndro by the end of Seminary, the Sakyong would like them to attend the Rigden abhisheka in 2005. After Seminary, they will continue to do the Shambhala ngöndro as their daily practice and complete the remainder of their group practice requirement before beginning *Werma* practice.

We are looking at ways of streamlining both the Shambhala Training path and the Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies. Students who are planning to submit an application to attend the 2005 Shambhala Seminary for the first time should continue their course work in the Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies, do a dathun, Sutrayana Seminary, and Entering the Vajra World. However, they should also plan to complete as much Shambhala Training as possible in the next year. Over the next month we will send out suggestions on how to best accomplish this. The reason for these requirements is that the practices and teachings of the Ashe, Rigden, lungta, Great Eastern Sun and the Four Dignities are central to a deep understanding of the Shambhala ngöndro and the *Werma Sadhana*.

Please contact us if you have any questions.

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