

# Shambhala Assembly Practice: Personal Reflection

Dear Shambhala Warrior,

Attending an assembly is a deeply personal decision. Assemblies are not the only way to proceed on the path of dharma or to be a Shambhalian. If you need support in making this decision, consider speaking with a trusted confidant, including but not limited to friends, teachers, meditation instructors, therapists, and others who have been to assemblies. Prior to attending any assembly, it is worthwhile to examine and refine our motivation and view of practicing in an assembly, knowing that every assembly is different.

We offer these reflection questions and quotes with the aspiration that we engage in our lives with clarity to recognize things as they are, and with huge hearts full of intention towards creating a world full of peace and dignity.

With care and support,  
The Practice and Education Assemblies Team

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## Reflection Questions (There are no right answers, and not knowing can be good.)

- **What is “being friendly to myself” and “taking care of myself” right now?**  
*How am I feeling? What is healthy for me? What is my personal ground right now?  
What patterns am I working with personally?*
- **What do I need at this time to support my path?**  
*What does it mean to have a spiritual path?  
What does it mean to progress on the path and what would be a sign of progress?  
Is the path linear, circular, spiral, all of these, or some other shape?*
- **What is my motivation for attending or not attending an assembly this year?**
- **What is special to me about gathering with other Shambhalian?**
- **How do I feel about the teacher-student relationship and about studying teachings offered by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche?**  
*Do I need more material to work with right now?  
Do I want to continue to study the Shambhala teachings at this time?*
- **What would it mean to me to view the assembly itself as a practice, and how might that be different than other group practices?**  
*What might the term “assembly practice” mean to me?  
What might assembly practice have to do with creating culture, with enlightened society?  
What roles and responsibilities do I have as an assembly participant?*
- **What are the personal and social challenges and rewards for me of engaging in assembly practice in the Shambhala community at this time?**  
*How might working with these affect me personally?  
Are these challenges and rewards the same or different than in the broader society?  
What societal habitual patterns are Shambhala, my country, the world working with now?*
- **What questions do I have prior to making a decision?**  
*What would be a sign that I am ready to make a decision?  
What would be a sign that I should wait and rest in space?*

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## Reflection Quotes

“If we do not know the material with which we are working, then our study is useless; speculations about the goal become mere fantasy. These speculations may take the form of advanced ideas and descriptions of spiritual experiences, but they only exploit the weaker aspects of human nature, our expectations and desires to see and hear something colorful, something extraordinary. If we begin our study with these dreams of extraordinary, “enlightening” and dramatic experiences, then we will build up our expectations and preoccupations so that later, when we are actually working on the path, our minds will be occupied largely with what will be rather than with what is. It is destructive and not fair to people to play on their weaknesses, their expectations and dreams, rather than to present the realistic starting point of what they are.”

*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, The Sanity We Are Born With, Chapter 9*

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“Within humanity is goodness that is alive and fully intact but, in these times, it is surrounded by the darkness of uncertainty and fear. If, by taking a moment to self-reflect, we realize the preciousness of our life and our connection with others, we can begin to feel the goodness that has sustained us throughout all time. In this seemingly insignificant moment when we feel our own goodness, a seismic shift occurs. Liberated of doubt regarding our nature, we see a vast, new horizon of human possibility.”

*Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, The Shambhala Principle, Chapter 1*

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“Two thousand five hundred years ago, Shakyamuni Buddha proclaimed that the next Buddha will be named Maitreya, the “Buddha of Love.” I think Maitreya Buddha may be a community and not just an individual. A good community is needed to help us resist the unwholesome ways of our time. Mindful living protects us and helps us go in the direction of peace. With the support of friends in the practice, peace has a chance.

“If you have a supportive sangha, it’s easy to nourish your bodhicitta, the seeds of enlightenment. If you don’t have anyone who understands you, who encourages you in the practice of the living dharma, your desire to practice may wither. Your sangha—family, friends, and copractitioners—is the soil, and you are the seed. No matter how vigorous the seed is, if the soil does not provide nourishment, your seed will die. A good sangha is crucial for the practice. Please find a good sangha or help create one.”

*Thich Nhat Hanh, Tricycle Magazine, Summer 2008*