

# **Mandala Governance and Structure**

## **Tenets of Shambhala Governance**

### **Preamble**

As a result of the first Congress a number of workgroups were established to carry forward the work of Shambhala. The Mandala Structure and Governance Workgroup was one of these. In its initial work, the Structure and Governance group felt that identifying key governance tenets (or principles) was both important in itself and also the most appropriate ground for a renewed vision of governance in our mandala. This paper, called the Tenets of Shambhala Governance, began at that point.

The document has continued to evolve over time. It is meant to highlight and encourage dialogue on central, overarching tenets that seem particularly important for Shambhala Governance. It will continue to evolve along with our vision of governance.

The Tenets are first set out below as simple statements. Following that, the rationale for each one is individually presented.

## **Mandala Governance and Structure Workgroup**

### **The Tenets of Shambhala Governance**

- Page 3      Shambhala society is a mandala continually evolving around the core principle of basic goodness and the path of individual and social enlightenment.
- Page 3      The overall role of governance and the work done by individual office holders is inextricably linked to the essence of the Shambhala and Buddhist teachings. This reflects the union of the secular and the sacred.
- Page 4      We share the deeply challenging responsibility to ourselves and the future Shambhala society to preserve our profound legacy while empowering the living mandala to articulate a contemporary vision and contemporary manifestation.
- Page 5      In the Shambhala mandala, the continuity of Kagyu, Nyingma and Shambhala teachings is protected and transmitted through the primacy of lineage.
- Page 5      Shambhala society is governed as a monarchy with the Sakyong as King.
- Page 6      As Monarch, the Sakyong has governing authority, where he chooses to use it, in all matters spiritual and secular.
- Page 6      The Court is the seat of Shambhala Government and Culture.
- Page 6      The cultivation of basic goodness and warriorship in society leads to the growth of open exchange in society – at all levels.
- Page 7      Shambhala monarchy is rooted in genuine representative bodies that broaden and give real meaning to participation in the governance processes of the mandala.
- Page 8      Shambhala governance connects Court and Society, manifests the dharma, administers the overall container for the teaching of the dharma, and provides mandala-wide services.
- Page 9      In Shambhala governance, natural hierarchy includes genuine participative consultation.

## **VIEW OF THE SHAMBHALA MANDALA**

**Shambhala society is a mandala continually evolving around the core principle of basic goodness and the path of individual and social enlightenment.**

*“The mandala is the representation of the complete environment of the universe as it is, physically, psychologically, and spiritually for the .... practitioner who has been introduced to wakefulness. As a symbol, the mandala expresses a method of transforming a confused, defiled understanding into a view that is based on emptiness and luminosity. Such a view.... according to our teachings, is completely clear because it is based upon understanding things as they really are, ultimately empty of inherent existence and full of the qualities of complete wakefulness.”*

(Excerpted and adapted from *Dakini’s Warm Breath: The Feminine Principle in Tibetan Buddhism*, Shambhala Publications 2001), Acharya Judith Simmer-Brown

*“Depending on how you look at Shambhala, we resemble a religion, an educational system, a business, a non-profit and so on. But we are not any single one of those. Our essential structure is that of a mandala. It is within the structure of the Shambhala Mandala that all our various activities of teaching, practice, study, governance and communication take place.*

*Imagine a central square surrounded by large concentric circles. In a classical mandala, the square in the middle would be the palace, housing the central figure. The outer circles would be the realms in which that core energy is manifested.*

*We can draw the Shambhala Mandala in the same way. The central square is The Kalapa Court. Within that is the lineage of Sakyongs. The radiating circles constitute the Shambhala community. The whole mandala is the Kingdom of Shambhala.”*

Excerpted from comments by President Reoch  
Core Structure of Shambhala paper, 2004

## **THE UNION OF SECULAR AND SACRED**

**The overall role of governance and the work done by individual office holders is inextricably linked to the essence of the Shambhala and Buddhist teachings. This reflects the union of the secular and the sacred.**

Shambhala vision expresses the union of secular and sacred experience. Such a view suggests we take every single aspect of our life as path and view it as sacred world.

With this outlook, not only the teacher and the teachings are considered relevant; so are the container and its atmosphere. This makes for a powerful teaching and learning situation, and it offers all kinds of opportunities to practice governance as another expression of sacred outlook.

Thus the roles of teacher, governor and protector are all called upon to manifest the union of the secular and the sacred. All office holders (teachers and meditation instructors; leaders of Shambhala Centres and other entities; the officers and members of the Dorje Kasung) are involved in manifesting the teachings themselves. Each may have a different emphasis in terms of the role they play; but in this they are essentially not different.

So, along with deep spiritual practice, we place emphasis on engaging our community and our governance properly at the most basic level. The work done by individual office holders is inextricably linked to the essence of the teachings.

## **JOINING LEGACY AND LIVING MANDALA**

***We share the deeply challenging responsibility to ourselves and the future Shambhala society to preserve our profound legacy while empowering the living mandala to articulate a contemporary vision and contemporary manifestation.***

Nearly everything recognizable in our society evolved in the era of the Druk Sakyong, the Vidyadhara, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. He transmitted a profound body of Buddhist and Shambhala teachings for the benefit of all future practitioners. The imprint of his presence is found in land and city centres, our vast archives, in our practices, programs and curricula, in the cultural forms we share, even in the very bloodstream of the Sakyong, Mipham Rinpoche. Many of our members received direct transmission at the feet of this Vajrayana guru and Shambhala King. For these members, the Shambhala world is bound inseparably with the Druk Sakyong.

For those who did not encounter the Druk Sakyong personally, this connection may at first appear less manifest. Further exploration and experience reveals that the mind stream of the Druk Sakyong continues to be a fresh and vivid source of inspiration and wisdom illuminating our Shambhala view, practice and action. As a mandala, we together share the responsibility to preserve this powerful legacy for current and future

practitioners and to find the most opportune skilful means to apply it to our current circumstance. This will always be essential, perhaps most poignantly so over the next 20 years, while so many of the Druk Sakyong's direct students continue to contribute their life energy to furthering our society.

The Druk Sakyong was fearless in proclaiming that the living dharma must be fresh and appropriate to its era. In that sense, we hold the principle that our legacy is a rich, living treasure which is not frozen. While preserving this legacy in both symbolic and specific ways, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche is empowered to evolve contemporary streams of teaching and manifestation for the current mandala and people who have yet to discover the path of meditation.

### **PRIMACY OF LINEAGE**

**In the Shambhala mandala, the continuity of Kagyu, Nyingma and Shambhala teachings is protected and transmitted through the primacy of lineage.**

The purpose of our society is the cultivation of enlightened mind and enlightened society, qualities that have for generations been protected and transmitted through the primacy of lineage.

Society protects and nourishes its lineages, and the lineages nourish and protect society. This reciprocity evolves from the ground of mutual respect and compassionate service and takes form as natural hierarchy.

As Shambhala society evolves, natural hierarchy expands to include the wealth of teachers and students who come forward to embody and carry the teachings to others. Thus from the mandala point of view, we can talk about the interrelationship of the primacy of lineage, natural hierarchy, and the lineage presence in each of us.

### **SAKYONG AS MONARCH**

*Shambhala society is governed as a monarchy by the lineage of Sakyongs.*

Our Shambhala society is governed as a monarchy with the Sakyong as King. We uphold this view of the Sakyong as having overarching authority; he is the secular head of our society and within our mandala the pre-eminent presenter of spiritual teachings.

The Shambhala Monarch must govern from the point of view of unconditional basic goodness and for the benefit of people. In addition to his empowerment by the Druk Sakyong, it is this profound and compassionate commitment which is the source of the Monarch's authority.

*“When we talk about a monarch here, we are talking about that which rules the world in the form of basic goodness. From this point of view, we regard basic goodness as the king or queen. It is almost an entity in itself, not just a metaphysical concept or an abstract theory of natural order.*

Chögyam Trungpa, *Great Eastern Sun*, Boston, Shambhala publication, 1999

*“We’re talking about monarchy, and monarchy usually is based on the notion of leadership of an individual in which — depending on whether it’s in the West or in the East — there is a quality of connection to some higher force. In the East they say heaven, in the West divine right, but altogether the notion of monarchy means that the power of rulership is invested in an individual who would see to the benefit of people.”*

Chögyam Trungpa, “Dekyong Council Retreat”, 25 May 1985

## **THE PREROGATIVE OF THE SAKYONG**

As Monarch, the Sakyong has authority, where he chooses to use it, in all spiritual and secular matters related to the governance of Shambhala.

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche is evolving a process that greatly expands broad participation in governance. He has implemented a consultative approach to forming representative bodies such as the Mandala Council and the Shambhala Congress. None the less, the Sakyong has overarching authority in all spiritual and secular matters as they relate to the governance of Shambhala.

## **THE COURT**

*The Court is the seat of Shambhala Government and Culture*

The Kalapa Court is more than a place where the Sakyong resides; it is the seat of Shambhala government and culture. It is a spiritual, physical and symbolic focal point for our society.

The Kalapa Court includes the Sakyong, the Sakyong Wangmo, the President of Shambhala, and others as determined by the Sakyong. The President exercises governance authority on behalf of the Sakyong.

As the seat of culture, the Court is the principle source for sustaining and renewing the cultural forms that provide a unifying atmosphere for our society.

As a spiritual, physical and symbolic focal point for society, the Court is a place in which Shambhalian can most fully experience the dignity of Court mandala and the continuity of lineage.

The power and energy of the Court arises from and expresses the primordial nature of the Rigden, the fundamental wisdom energy of basic goodness. Connection with this unobstructed goodness is the basis for good human society and genuine rulership. Therefore, we recognize Kalapa Court and Court Vision as a practice more than a place.

### **MONARCHY AND SHAMBHALA SOCIETY**

*The cultivation of basic goodness and warriorship in society leads to the growth of open exchange in society – at all levels.*

Our shared Shambhala vision is to create enlightened society actually, not merely metaphorically. Socially, our shared path is to evolve an open, compassionate and empowered culture. For this we need appropriate forums for full and open exchange. Thus, one expression of the cultivation of basic goodness and warriorship in society is the growth of open exchange in society at all levels.

How we evolve and nurture the depth and breadth of exchange in our social forums is critical. It is most important that governance processes support individuals and groups in openly sharing their genuine experience and views, rather than what they think others want to hear. This brings into relief the participatory aspect of monarchy.

### **SHAMBHALA MONARCHY**

**Shambhala monarchy is rooted in genuine representative bodies that broaden and give real meaning to participation in the governance processes of the mandala.**

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche has encouraged us to put significant thought toward developing a genuine participatory political system for our contemporary Shambhala society. This will ensure that the Court is in open and direct communication with individual members and constituencies, and that those members and constituencies have their views and concerns addressed in open venues. This developing system of governance envisions a large representative governing body and a significant role for the Shambhala Congress, both of which are intended to broaden and give real meaning to social participation in governance.

The Congress is not envisioned by the workgroup as a venue for referendum or plebiscite during which delegates or members vote to ratify or reject government proposals or policies. It is intended to provide a venue for citizens and constituencies to have real and open dialogue on issues important to them. Those views can then enter the awareness of the Court and the governing bodies so all decision making is appropriately informed.

Therefore our evolution of democratic and participatory forms is not an alternative to hierarchy which was carefully expounded and enacted by the Druk Sakyong. In his Shambhala teachings, he explicated the principles of natural hierarchy, the recognition of self-existing connections and relationships within the phenomenal world. In Shambhala our approach to society and governance reflects the dignity and innate sacredness of a mandala that appreciates natural order and harmony.

*“The experience of sacred world begins to show you how you are woven together with the richness and brilliance of the phenomenal world. You are a natural part of that world, and you begin to see possibilities of natural hierarchy or natural order which would provide the model for how to conduct your life. Ordinarily, hierarchy is regarded in the negative sense as a ladder or vertical power structure with power concentrated at the top. If you are on the bottom rungs of that ladder then you feel oppressed by what is above you and you try to abolish it or you try to climb higher on the ladder. But for the warrior, discovering hierarchy is seeing the great Eastern Sun reflected everywhere in everything. You see possibilities of order in the world that are not based on struggle and aggression. In other words, you perceive a way to be in harmony with the phenomenal world that is neither static nor repressive. So the understanding of hierarchy manifests as a sense of natural decorum, or knowing how to behave. That is, you see how to be naturally in this world because you experience dignity and elegance that do not have to be cultivated....You feel at home in your world.*

Chögyam Trungpa, From *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*, Chapter 16, “Sacred World.”

The Congress will be a process in which the views of individual members and constituencies can find the full light of day while continuing to respect and develop our Court Vision with its attendant manifestation of Shambhala forms and decorum. It is a forum for participatory monarchy that Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche envisions and that the Druk Sakyong spoke of in relation to the Delegs.

*“The delek system cuts down the extraordinary hypocrisy of dictatorship, as well as the idea of too much democracy. It brings us a middle path, which is somewhat democratic: your individual contributions could become very positive and excellent through the delek system, and the dictatorial aspect of society could be cut down. Our notion of hierarchy is more like a flower than a lid. It is more like a waterfall than a volcano. Hierarchy can help people organize their lives in such a way that they can contribute individually – everyone one of them.”*

Chögyam Trungpa, “Dekyong Oath Ceremony”, 15 June 1982

## **SHAMBHALA GOVERNANCE**

***Shambhala governance connects Court and Society, manifests the dharma, administers the overall container for the teaching of the dharma, and provides mandala-wide services.***

### ***Government connects Court and Society***

*“The role of the Sakyong is to provide space, to protect the space, so that the flowers can blossom. The sun does not pull the flowers up to the sky; the flowers grow, reaching toward heaven. If heaven is too close, the flowers will not exert themselves. Therefore the administration is necessary as the extension of the Sakyong’s ability to provide and protect the space.”*

*“The administration stems from Kalapa Court, the seat of the Sakyong. The energy that is generated within the Court is carried out by the administration; the energy that is generated toward the Kalapa Court is harnessed by the administration. It is not the role of the administration to dampen or suffocate. If it becomes too thick, its members tend to become complacent and irritated. When it can extend the energy of the Court as the basis of inspiration, the members of the community look in and around themselves for solutions, realizing their responsibility to communicate with others and to motivate themselves.”*

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, *Treatise on Society and Organisation*

### ***Shambhala governance manifests the dharma and provides a container for the teaching of the dharma.***

One of the first and most unique things that the Druk Sakyong did for his students in the west was to create a comprehensive, structured path of practice and study. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche continues to uphold this principle. Naturally such a graduated and unified path of study brings with it the need for considerable administration - in preserving, evolving and communicating the curriculum and the social environment where teaching and practice occurs.

The Druk Sakyong was also unique in deciding early on that an organization (then called Vajradhatu and Dharmadhatu) would be responsible for holding the structure of the path, and administering the overall container for the transmission of dharma, as well as manifesting the dharma itself. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche has also maintained this view, and by the appointment of the President has strengthened our organization.

*The central governance structure provides mandala-wide core services.*

Certain services can only be provided through mandala-wide, central governance. These core services include

- support for the “exemplary centre” we call the Court
- the protection of the entire mandala and its teachings
- common cultural forms worldwide, part of what bind us together as a society.
- a consistent curriculum for use by local communities
- a well developed body of authorized senior teachers and instructors,
- international programs such as seminaries, assemblies, and the Congress
- mandala wide communications
- the ability to present a unified face to the world
- incubation of new centres
- the financial benefits from concerted action
- the defence of the good name and trade identity of Shambhala

Our Shambhala governing structure must have a clearly defined mandate and broad support from the Shambhala society to fulfil these roles effectively.

### **DECISION MAKING AND PARTICIPATION IN SHAMBHALA GOVERNANCE**

*In Shambhala governance, natural hierarchy includes genuine participative consultation.*

A distinctive feature of mandala structure as expressed through our social monarchy is the fact that decisions of major significance to the mandala at any level may be taken by the Sakyong, President and others empowered by the Sakyong and the Kalapa Court. A further aspect of mandala principle is that decisions making includes an appropriate balance of participative consultation. If there is too much authority, the energy, involvement and creative insight of the community is stifled and community needs are not sufficiently expressed or understood. If there is too much "democracy," a confusing level of complexity develops and there is little forward motion.

Good decision process involves finding a balance. One role of leadership is to facilitate this balance, to make sure that in all important decisions those impacted are free to speak and be heard. Decision making should be informed by this consultation. In return, it is important that our leaders are properly empowered with sufficient authority to make informed decisions.

In general, consulting and establishing a basis of broad agreement around key issues increase trust, goodwill and community involvement, and often expand the range of

creative options available. Consultative processes also offer good training for how to practice secular sacred governance in our mandala.

An authentic process of participative consultation combined with a clear decision-making structure based on natural hierarchy is not the same as unanimous agreement. Unanimity requires the agreement of all involved, thus giving the power of veto to any member of the community. This is seldom practical in diverse communities. Therefore, in our social monarchy we are seeking to find a working balance between genuine participation which is respected as a basis for decision making by the leadership at all levels of our mandala.

Fostering genuine participation and consultation also require time and energy, both of which are quite precious commodities. There are certainly some occasions when members may feel such consultation is not the most appropriate use of community or leadership's time. If the atmosphere of trust and understanding is lower, inclusion and consultation can help repair the fabric of community. If trust and understanding is high, the community may prefer that leaders move forward more decisively.

### **PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES OF CONSULTATION AND DECISION MAKING**

It is important to distinguish between "consultation" (asking for input from a large group) and actual decision-making (often by a leader or smaller group). For example, scheduling programs for the next year could begin with input from broader participation, but the actual scheduling is best done by those in charge of programming.

In decision making, it is helpful to understand who should to be involved. There are some additional simple principles that can provide practical guidance in this. They emerge from contemplating two criteria: 1) how critical is it to get the decision right? and 2) how much commitment is asked of others once the decision is made?

- If getting the decision right is critically important, and a great deal of commitment is required by the community, broad agreement is often needed. (Examples: where should we locate the new Shambhala Centre, or how should we evolve our governance model?)
- If getting the decision right is not critically important, yet commitment is required from others, consultation with those involved creates a supportive framework for making and implementing the decision. (Example: where shall we hold the reception?)
- If getting the decision right is critically important, yet not a lot of commitment is required by the broader community, people with the particular expertise should be able to make the decision. (Example: what type of roof repair would best solve this leak?)

- If getting the decision right is not critically important, and not a lot of commitment is required by the broader community, the decision can be delegated to the appropriate person. (Example: what brand of copy paper should we buy?)

Leaders face many different types of decisions, and contemplating these criteria might help leaders reach good decision processes and outcomes. In all cases, it is important that the administration cultivate in their communities an open and fluid exchange of communication. Here again, attention to fundamental Shambhala principles and trainings provides insight. The process of communication and exchange can be the natural unfolding of the process of 'joining heaven and earth' - where mutual inquisitiveness leads to sophisticated exploration, trust, inspiration and ultimately further connection and appreciation. In this atmosphere, the likelihood of achieving workable outcomes and understanding between participants, regardless of perspectives, is enhanced.

*Last revised following Sakyong' Council discussion, March 2006*