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Edited extracts from talks and discussion groups

“We are literally beginning to till the soil...”

Extracts from the introduction and opening talk by President Richard Reoch

We are at a very, very early stage of trying to figure out what the Shambhala Path of Social Action could possibly be, what the challenges are, and how we might proceed. The only way to do that is to get people together and talk about this. Like an agricultural project, we are literally beginning to till the soil.

Social action is a profound and complex subject. Part of the richness of what we can do together is to see just how profound and complex it is. We need to be able to relax into the complexity and the profundity and not worry about coming out of this with a common view.

It is important to acknowledge, first of all, that there are a number of people in our mandala who don't think this initiative is a good idea. We may also discover considerable differences among ourselves as well. There are people who recall moments when they were ready to join demonstrations and were told by the Vidyadhara not to do so. There's a debate about whether he meant that it was not appropriate for those particular people to do at that particular time or whether he said this because his view of social engagement was different. Sadly, it is not something that, as far as I can tell, was fully explored in his lifetime. So there is a question mark there.

There are people who believe that the only appropriate role for Shambhalians is to follow the training programs that we have and to deepen our meditative practice. For them, that *is* the Shambhala Path of Social Action: our path is deeply transformative for us as individuals and because there is no separation between an individual and a society, then ultimately the commitment to one's own path is socially transforming.

There are others who are of the view that we are socially, racially and politically narrow. We are a white liberal outfit. A consequence of this is that I have had to apologize on behalf of Shambhala to some of our members who feel that they are not welcome in this community, at least not in North America, because of who they vote for and because they support their government's actions. Those people have felt a sense of hostility, even a sense of exclusion, as members and practitioners within Shambhala -- even before anybody opened up discussion about a Shambhala Path of Social Action.

While I think there is a tremendous amount that we as Shambhalians could do that would deepen and improve social action in the world, I also carry the responsibility of being president. I am fully conscious of the need to protect the unconditional space and accommodation of our mandala and of our shrine rooms. Shambhala is not something from which people should ever feel excluded because of their opinions, beliefs or other allegiances.

It is not going to be easy to fit those different perspectives together. If, in these few days, we can really explore this, we will find our time together very, very rich. We have to figure out the answers to these questions, not just together as a group of people interested in this issue, but also with a view to charting a path that takes into account those who aren't

interested and those who disagree.

“The jewel discovered in a heap of dust”

At home we have a little black cat named “Tashi”, the Tibetan for “good luck”. One summer evening, I was watching the evening news with Tashi on my lap. Suddenly the television screen was filled with news of a massacre, with many images of the dead. It was a very poignant moment. I was so moved, I started to think about the behaviour of human beings in comparison to cats.

I remember saying to Tashi that cats don’t do this sort of thing. If there were an evening news program about cats you wouldn’t find genocide, religious wars and the destruction of the planet. At that point I was sure that human beings, including myself, were vastly inferior to cats, both in the moral sense and as planetary citizens. I really sank into that feeling. It’s so easy to get attached to this kind of despondency because, for all the teeth and claws that animals have, they really don’t do things that are as awful as human beings do.

While I was sitting there feeling bad about being a human being, a fly came in through the window. At that point my perceptions of Tashi changed rather radically. He had taken no interest in the news, but he certainly took an interest in that fly. His ears picked up, his claws came out and off he went in the murderous pursuit of this fly. Well, I thought, perhaps my earlier view of Tashi wasn’t quite complete. I watched him do the most extraordinary things in an effort to get that fly. Cats and humans are actually just the same, I said to myself. It’s only a question of circumstance. Then I settled down into the view that it’s all hopeless. We are all destined to regard other beings as mere objects; to satisfy our survival urges we will take almost anything as dinner; and nothing will get in the way once we have decided to go for the kill.

I couldn’t just sit there and allow this cat (for whom I feel some sense of responsibility) go ahead and simply kill the fly. So I ran around after him, put him out of the room, shut the door and got the fly out the window. I let Tashi back in the room and sat down again. After a while, I asked myself: would Tashi ever jump up in defence of a creature from another species and spend all this time running around to save the life of someone from the Phylum Arthropoda? I have to say that after six years with this cat, I’ve never seen him do anything like that. I asked myself if what I did was the result of being a rare, highly accomplished being or whether all people have an additional instinct, somewhat like an extra gene in addition to the gene pool that we share with cats and the perpetrators of genocide. Perhaps because of my life as a Buddhist, I concluded that this is something we *all* have as people. We are neither worse than cats, nor the same as cats. We are similar, but different.

When we practise the Four Reminders, we reflect on having a precious human birth. But we have not only been born into a situation where we can listen to talks about bodhichitta. We have been born with this extra chromosome, this instinct, this gene, that enables us not only to hear about bodhichitta but also to put it into practice.

That is my understanding of the line in the Bodhisattva Vow that refers to the jewel discovered in the heap of dust. The heap of dust is many things. It includes the massacre I saw on the news that evening. It includes the depressing perception that human beings are at times worse than animals. But within that heap of dust there is also this moment when it is possible to completely practise sending and taking -- to place ourselves in the position of the victim, to come to the aid of those at risk and thereby also to the karmic defence of the aggressor.

“In the third watch of the night”

In my own effort to understand this, I have come to see a connection with the experience that the Buddha is said to have had in the third watch of the night on which he attained enlightenment. This is very beautifully described by the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh in *Old Path White Clouds*. The Buddha is said to have seen light filtering through a leaf on the bodhi tree and reflected on the interdependence of all that exists. He saw that the leaf could not exist separately from the light, rain, soil and air. What we mistakenly take for our own separate existence is nothing more than this process of complete interdependence. Traditionally in certain Buddhist schools, it is said that it was this penetrating insight of total interdependence, the fundamental nature of all phenomena, that opened the door to his complete enlightenment.

The question that many of us ask -- especially those who work with social conflict and other issues -- is whether this understanding of interdependence is a higher accomplishment that we have to work at and acquire or whether it is something that is basically there all the time.

Occasionally I have experiences that make me feel that this deep sense of interdependence is there all the time, and is not something we have to acquire. Although my parents became buddhists in mid life (and dragged me off to become a buddhist at a very early age), in common with most North Americans we had screens on our windows and doors to keep insects out. If a fly got in, everything would stop, no matter what. Our ritual sceptre was the fly swatter. Our group ritual was the killing of fly after fly after fly. We all participated, and I can't think of anything else to which we devoted so much group energy as a family. So you can imagine my horror years later when I had to attend the three-month seminary at what was then Rocky Mountain Shambhala Center and found myself day after day in a large tent in which the screens didn't work! I had all this conditioning about the diseases that flies carry. Even in the midst of the highest teachings on emptiness and compassion, I could imagine teensy pools of fly vomit on me. It's a good thing that we had to spend three months there, because it was only towards the end that I noticed that I no longer objected to the delicate tickle of flies walking on my hand. I remember this moment with great poignancy. I thought, Ah, I'm getting somewhere. I didn't have to acquire this tolerance. All I had to do was sit long enough, be exposed to the company of other people on the path, all our difficulties and the teachings. If I more or less practised what I was being taught, eventually I would get back to the ability to share this planet with other beings who mean absolutely no harm.

“From the moment the Communist troops began to march”

That confidence in the power of our teachings and our tradition, when juxtaposed with a world in desperate turmoil, must have been somewhat in the mind of the young Chögyam Trungpa when he wrote: “From the moment the Communist troops began to march through our property in the Surmang monastery, I thought that a greater society of buddhadharma could be created, that a greater vision could be executed properly. Since then, and continuously, my Shambhala vision has never diminished.”

Our tradition and our community provide not only meditation instruction, practice programs and teachings, but also holds a banner that proclaims commitment to “enlightened society”. The Vidyadhara was unable in his all-too-short lifetime to flesh this out fully. He left it for us to work on, rather like a koan. Perhaps it was a command, or a challenge or a question. But it is definitely not something that we can ignore. Fundamentally, we are invited to explore it, understand it, and manifest it.

We catch a glimpse of this by reflecting on our ancestral sovereigns. The Emperor

Yung Lo was a great social transformer, completely engaged with the mechanisms of society. Great Prince Shotoku Taishi completely suffused his nation building with the principles of the buddhadharma, a remarkable educator and social practitioner. The Emperor Ashoka, standing on the battlefield of Kalinga, saw walking in the distance a monk and from that moment turned from the path of devastation to the path of social transformation. Describing him, the British historian H.G. Wells wrote: “Among the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, the name of Ashoka shines, and shines almost alone—a star.” All were completely engaged with the leadership and management of human society to effect the unification of the spiritual and the secular on a national scale. These are three of our ancestors.

Our other great ancestor is the Buddha. It is common to think of the Buddha manifesting the virtues of a renunciate, teacher and supreme physician. We need to remember also that in the 45 years between his enlightenment and parinirvana he travelled ceaselessly, creating communities wherever he went. We are the direct descendants of those communities. They are based on clear socio-economic principles.

They were based on sharing. What we call the Buddha bowl in our oryoki sets was originally the *bhiksha patra*, the sharing bowl – used for collecting food from virtually all sectors of the stratified society of the Buddha’s time, including both Brahmins and the so-called untouchables. It was a gigantic statement, only one of his many as a social radical. This is part of his legacy. How do we, his followers, create a society in which sangha, community, is based on principles that reflect his profound insight of interdependence?

“A spectrum of possibilities”

From talking to a number of people in Shambhala about the social dimension of Shambhala vision, I have come to see that the idea of social action is not a question of “yes” or “no”. There seems to be a spectrum of possibilities. I’d like to offer a very rough snapshot of that spectrum as a basis for reflection.

There are many ways of looking at this. Let’s say the full width of the spectrum is defined at one end by activity wholly outside Shambhala, and at the other by activity formally undertaken by Shambhala or in the name of Shambhala.

We could begin by looking at roughly eight defining points along this spectrum.

There are activities that people engage in that have no formal connection with Shambhala at all. Nonetheless, all of these are ways in which they manifest Shambhala principles or vision. These can include, for example, people’s professional lives, the voluntary activities and associations they are involved in, the various forms of social, political and environmental activism in which they are engaged, and the way in which they bring Shambhala vision into their lives as householders and family members. You can see this clearly in the two documents prepared for the Shambhala Congress: *The Shambhala Survey* and *Glimpses of Shambhala*. Both showed, in a series of snap shots, the many ways in which individual Shambhalians manifest in the world at large.

At the next point on the spectrum, we start to enter the formal world of Shambhala. Our paths of Shambhala and Buddhist training include key practices with a social dimension, such as the practice of tonglen and the ideas introduced in the Shambhala Level “Warrior in the World”. Some people feel that we could further strengthen these teachings and their social relevance by looking at the types of examples we use in our presentation, to ensure that these are clearly understood to embrace large issues in our world as well as in people’s personal lives. We could describe this as widening the field of examples we use to describe the

relevance of the Buddhist and Shambhala teachings.

The third point on the spectrum has to do with the type of nurture and support Shambhala gives to people involved in social activism. There could be specially designed programs for people within our mandala who face the common problems of fatigue, despair and burn-out in the very demanding work that they do. Another possibility would be to offer programs of this type to provide inner support for social activists generally who also face huge problems in finding a contemplative path that supports their compassionate action in society.

A fourth point on the spectrum would be where a local Shambhala Centre deliberately provides space for listening, inquiry and discussion on social issues. The centre itself does not take a position on the issues, but it provides sane, spacious ground for people to come together to talk to each other about them. In one centre this is formalized into a Council on World Affairs that also invites guest speakers to present on various topics. In another centre, local political candidates were invited to make their pitches to the Shambhala community.

That takes us to the next level of engagement on an organizational level. We already do this through independent organizations that exist under the broad umbrella of Shambhala. A lot of what happens at Naropa University would come under this category, particularly its program on Engaged Buddhism. So would the work of The Friendship Society in Nova Scotia, the Shambhala Institute for Authentic Leadership, the network we have in prisons, the work of the Greyston Foundation in Yonkers, New York, and so on. In all of these activities, Shambhala as a whole is not responsible for the work of these entities, but it is clear that all this starts with and/or is sustained wholly or in part by the deep impulse of Shambhala vision.

So far on this spectrum, Shambhala itself has not taken any position on anything, but recognizes that we have space, people and programs to offer in many useful contexts. From time to time, however it could be possible for Shambhala itself to make statements of vision and principle. The Council of Warriors did this in a submission to a task force in Nova Scotia. Shambhala Europe did this in a submission to the European Community on the Future of Europe. I wrote on behalf of the Sakyong to the Secretary General of the United Nations before the invasion of Iraq. None of these could be described as taking a position, but rather setting out our larger vision.

At this point on the spectrum the question comes up as to whether we can collaborate with others in the social action field. This might be an attractive option since we can contribute a great deal in that way and work with other organizations' expertise and inspiration in this area. This could include inter-religious or inter-Buddhist cooperation. For example, I am on a very small steering committee of Buddhist leaders exploring the possibility of an International Buddhist Peace Service.

At the eighth point, we come to the possibility of Shambhala itself taking action in its own name on specific issues. This would require Shambhala to articulate positions on social and political policies. For example, we were asked by James George at the last Kalapa Assembly to oppose the deployment of weapons in space. Another example relates to the fact that European nations are becoming less hospitable to asylum seekers: the question has come up as to whether Shambhala in those countries can speak out against this.

Running the whole length of this spectrum are two bands. One is the band that applies to individuals. This band would include all the different ways in which people can relate to the many options for activity along the spectrum. Obviously people remain free to engage or not, however they wish.

The other band that runs along the whole length of the spectrum applies to us as a

community. This band would include the ways in which we relate to each other and organize ourselves in relation to different possible activities. It also relates to Shambhala as a community itself. Shouldn't we try to solve our own problems (many of which are exactly the same as the larger issues we see in society around us) so that we can learn how to work with these? There are certainly those who would argue that this is the real challenge – leading by example. This is close to the Buddha's approach: create communities and figure out how to share and live with each other. If we ourselves learn how to deal with prejudice, aggression and all the obstacles we face, then we might become luminous as a group of people and inspire others to say, "Oh look, there is a group of human beings who have actually figured out how to live together!"

"When we rest in the nature of mind"

Sometimes all this seems very far removed from Level One and meditation instruction. Some people fear we will throw the baby out with the bathwater. They worry that once we introduce this subject we will all become discursive and political. "Whatever happened to following the breath?" they ask.

It is extremely important that we not disengage from the ground of our practice. Otherwise we will cut the source of inspiration and won't be any different to all the other groups of people who are steamed up about the world.

In this context it may be helpful to recall a teaching by Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche on the *Thirty-seven Practices of Bodhisattvas* by Togmay Sangpo. In it he describes the complete practice of the paramitas in terms of resting in the nature of mind:

Resting fully and unshakeably in the nature of mind embraces the practice of transcendental wisdom. Each of the six paramitas is included within it. This is the practice of engagement bodhichitta:

When we rest in the nature of mind without grasping,
we are practising the paramita of generosity.

When we rest in the nature of mind without indulging thoughts,
we are practising the paramita of discipline.

When we rest in the nature of mind without harming anyone,
we are practising the paramita of patience

When we rest in the nature of mind with consistent effort,
we are practising the paramita of diligence.

When we rest in the nature of mind with peacefulness,
we are practising the paramita of samadhi.

When we rest in the nature of mind in the awakened state,
we are practising the paramita of prajna.

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Group Discussion on the spectrum of possibilities

The program participants discussed the rough outline of the spectrum and made the following points:

It should be understood that each individual offers the playground for cultivating warriorship in the world, so the sort of “points” on a scale suggested in the rough outline need to be understood as much more permeable.

Another thing that centres can do is to provide information on social issues and organizations on a notice board.

The importance of having a space where people could share their experiences on social issues was felt to be a very helpful idea. There must be clear communication not only among those interested in these issues, but a neutral space where the community and those involved in social action can share views and concerns.

The social activists within our community should not push hard on issues, but work sensitively with the rest of our mandala. We should look for generally shared ideas rather than push ahead with divisive action. Social action needs a social foundation beyond individual inspiration and sitting: it requires a lot of discussion and deeper understanding in our own community.

We need a framework that embodies Shambhala principles for undertaking this. For example, how does this embrace all the many institutions created by the Vidyadhara? Where are the arts and culture in this path?

There seemed to be a measure of broad agreement that Shambhala should find a style of speaking and acting on these issues that embodies the spirit of our lineage, and not fall into conventional modes of denunciation and demonstration. We should certainly avoid evangelical religious statements.

If statements are to be made or endorsed formally by Shambhala it needs to be clear who is going to have the final approval on this.

There was a feeling that we need to clarify the kind of “nurture and support” that we can offer to activists both within our community and outside it.

How would this type of path of social engagement be related to our normal programs, especially since many people come to Shambhala as a haven in their quest for peace of mind and protection?

How would this path be regulated, and funded? Would there be any form of pre-requisites for entering this path, or would it be open to anyone?

It is important to realize that Shambhala is not alone in contemplating its role in society. We have a lot to learn from others and there could be much we could learn from cooperating with others.

We are in an experimental phase. We might have to try some things and drop them. There will be an aspect of trial and error. One approach would be to focus on some specific activities and learn from that. We can develop larger principles from that experience.

Conflicts will occur. They don't need to be shunned. We need to work with these in a constructive way and need a space for that.

It might be helpful to explore the lineage of social engagement within our community.

This program was social action in itself. It mixed discussion with meditation and other

practices that enabled us to hold different ideas and respect each other's perspectives and experience...

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“Being in the world...”

Extracts from the talk by Desung General, Simon La Haye

We are talking about being in the world and not only are we talking about being in the world but we are talking about how can we make social action our practice. So how can we benefit others at the same time and connecting with what we are? Since Kasung is really a very profound practice of post meditation, of how to bring this view and this practice that we have in our daily life, we felt that that was completely appropriate to this program. Therefore I want to share with you some of the teachings that both Trungpa Rinpoche and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche have given us and how we apply them so that possibly they could be useful in other circumstances.

The notion of protector is the notion that the world always gives us feedback or answers. We project our ego, we project our solidification on the world and the world in a way is uncompromising. It doesn't care about whether you are a good boy or good girl, doesn't care about what you think. It just sends you back reality. It is a mirror. So the external notion of protector is the world. The world can wake you up because of its beauty; the world can wake you up because it sends you back messages that are painful. How the world is to you is just an expression of how you are living your own life. So in a way it has a wrathful quality: it's just sending back to you what you project onto it without sparing you. But at the same time it is very nurturing. It doesn't particularly care about your trips, but it can give you a tremendous support because it can wake you up constantly.

Protector has also an internal aspect: it is our own intelligence. It is our power to wake up. This happens somewhat naturally when we are practicing: we are spacing out and then suddenly we are there. But it is also a question of discipline, of how much we are open, how much we are vulnerable. Vulnerability is the willingness to open and listen to the feedback of the world. It is also a question of discipline.

The external notion of protector and the internal notion of protector feed on each other and enrich each other. The more you are able to open up the more the world comes into you and wakes you up and it has tremendous richness. So protector is really working with your experience and working with others.

Normally we view action, we see our role in the world, as doing something or accomplishing something. Which means that you are the person who is going to solve a problem or create something or build something. The vajrayana view is that protectors are the root of action. What are we protecting? We are protecting intelligence that is already there. We are protecting basic goodness. Teaching is not about putting a lot of knowledge into students. It's about awakening virtues that are already there. It's really taking the point of view of basic goodness and bodhichitta. Once you take that as a basis for your action it becomes an incredibly powerful force. You can really touch people, and you can also learn a lot from them.

“A sense of being”

The fundamental principle that the Dorje Dradul gave to the Kasung, and I think that this would apply also to social action or working in the world is a sense of being. One of the first

teachings that he gave us as protector is: “you have to be”. All of this is about being. It is a sense of space, of connecting with where we are and what we are. It is very similar to what president Reoch was talking about yesterday in terms of resting in the nature of the mind. That's the basis for any action. When you say you have to “just be”, your first question is “be what?” You should be something: I should be a good Kasung; I should be a Buddhist; I should be Shambhalian. But it's not being something, it's just being. You don't have to be something. You just have to be. If you are trying to be something then you look in the manual and you try to figure out all the steps. But instead if you are able to be, then you can be victorious -- because you have a direct connection with the situation and you find how to relate to it.

When we have to face difficult situations -- somebody who has been very aggressive, somebody is suffering a lot -- the first thing you want to do is make things better. We always try to fill that space. It is extremely difficult to be with somebody who is suffering or somebody who is angry and feel that anger, feel that pain. We cannot really be in the world, we cannot really act properly, if we are not able to do that, if we are not able to feel our own pain, our own fear and feel the other person's fear and pain. And you can only do it from the space, the sense of being.

Basically what we are doing as Kasung and what I am sure is the inspiration of everybody to be here is to serve others, to help others. This is an expression of our basic goodness. We don't need to be fully enlightened to start being generous. It is our true nature to be kind to others and to be generous. We all want to help. The first Trungpa was called Trugmase. It means “the one who is close” and I think that Trungpa means “servant” too. Trungpa Rinpoche felt that he was serving people. The Sakyong always says, “I am here for you”. Basically he is there so serve other people. They are a tremendous source of inspiration because they have made their life completely available to other people. They never have a moment of privacy and whatever they are doing is teaching.

Trungpa Rinpoche used to say, “anybody who has a sense of their own suffering can come into my space. I can teach them”. He devoted his life to his students.

So it's really again seeing any action in terms of basic goodness. As long as somebody possesses basic goodness and some sense of vulnerability they are completely workable. He described being a Mukpo first as somebody who is willing to serve and help anybody who has a sense of their own vulnerability and to relate with the basic goodness in everybody.

The second part of being a Mukpo, as he described it, is to overcome arrogance. I think that's completely relevant to what we are trying to do here. When you are there to help somebody, the first thing you think is “this person is going to see how brilliant I am”. There is often a feeling of “that person doesn't know how lucky they are that I am there to help them”. But it's not really about that. It's about being open and going beyond any fixed notion of what is going to help and what is not going to help. If we just want to help following a completely fixed plan, we are just perpetuating aggression. We are just dumping our thing on somebody. Therefore the idea is to be constantly open. Not thinking that we have figured out the whole thing and therefore we are going to help. It's again going back to the notion of protector. We protect some jewel that is there; we are not there to give some profound wisdom to somebody. We are there to awaken what is already there.

The last aspect I would like to present in this discussion of enlightened action, of action from the point of view of protector, is the notion of bringing down drala. Bringing sacredness and bringing awareness in the situation. Drala and protector are actual the same thing. Or phrased differently: drala is the idea of protector within the Shambhala teachings. Gesar is a drala protector; Magyal Pomra is a drala protector. The Buddhist protectors are very

wrathful; Shambhala protectors represent dignity and awakening. So the dignity of a situation, the dignity of our own life can wake us up.

The Dorje Dradul presented three analogies, three metaphors of how this can be done. The first one is creating a container. It's like a butter lamp: you have the wick in the middle and the flame and if you don't have the container, if you don't have the vase around it then the butter just goes everywhere, the oil goes everywhere and there is no flame. So basically when there is a teaching situation you want to make this clear, you want to point to the fact that you are entering a sacred place, you are entering a teaching situation. The notion of container is not to block everything; it is not to prevent things or people from come in. There has to be an inside and outside and possibilities of going in and out. But you want to mark the fact that you are penetrating sacred space.

The second metaphor is the one of horizon. The horizon is just a reference point. If you see the earth and the sky there is a line that makes the difference between the two. If you don't have it then you don't see the difference. So in this case it is a reference point of awake. It's just this reference point presenting something else, other possibilities. This can wake you up; it can enable you to touch your own intelligence, your own wisdom.

The third one is a gentle wind that pushes away the clouds that obstructs the sun. So the gentleness is the notion of non-aggression. Again it is going into a situation without arrogance, without imposing yourself. It's just letting the natural intelligence of the situation shine through. The world presents us with what we feel to be obstacles. Basically there are all kind of obstacles to achieve what we want to achieve. There is sickness or there is confusion. Our reaction is always to try to push these away, push the obstacles, push the problems away. But from the point of view of drala, from the point of view of protector, those are actually opportunities. The real obstacle is not the obstacles themselves but how we work with them. We see them as a problem that needs to be pushed away, rather than something actually helps us to wake up.

“The Art of War...”

In “The Art of War” by Sun Tzu, a book that Trungpa Rinpoche gave to the Kasung saying ‘this is your dharma, you should study it’, there is this principle of “taking whole”: Sun Tzu says that: in warfare the best thing is to undo the enemy's strategy. If you cannot do this you try to undermine their alliances. Less good is to do battle, and the worst is to put the cities under siege. The idea is that war is a very serious matter and unless it's very necessary you should never conduct it. If you are fighting the enemy it is very costly, it destroys a lot. So at the end even if you conquer territory, you have less.

So this is the notion of taking whole. In any action, in any interaction with somebody, whatever you are engaged in, you are trying to bring about the intelligence of the situation. It's not about you conquering something; it's about the whole situation becoming more wholesome, better. It's a very interesting point of view of warfare. If you look at what just happened in Iraq it is very striking. In a way the Americans felt that they needed to solve a problem. They felt that they had something better to offer, a better view, a better system. Basically what came out of it was more aggression. There was no sense of respect or trying to figure out what the situation was. It would have been probably more profitable to try to nurture that situation rather than put it down.

“The Four Karmas”

Finally I would like to talk about the Four Karmas. In a way they are very simple, it is the way any action unfolds. First you look at the situation, then you see what that situation is, then you do something with it and then it's over. Sometimes it's very useful to look at things in this very simple way. Pacifying is morning, enriching is noon, sunset is magnetizing. In

the morning anything is possible, you are starting your day. By noon you are in full activity. Then magnetizing is harvesting the result of that activity. Then you have the night, the end. Then you have to get on something else the next day. So it is really simple but there is a lot in it nevertheless.

Pacifying is morning, it is this sense of being that we talked about, sense of space. It is coming back when you space out; it is your own discipline. It is coming back to something that is completely open rather than putting your aggression on something. In terms of action it is going beyond hope and fear, it is basically being open. We can always come back to that clean slate. It is practice, it is constant, it is every moment. In terms of working with others it is touching their basic goodness, touching their vulnerability or their intelligence. This is the only way that you can really genuinely work with the situation. At the same time there can be an edge to pacifying. If somebody is too aggressive maybe you need to call the police and get them arrested. Then the next morning you might be able to talk to them. If somebody is psychotic there might be no possibility to connect with their intelligence. You might need to get help for that person. They might need to go to the hospital or be on medication or whatever. You need to bring whatever situation to a point where you can work with it, where there is an opening and a willingness to engage, to be open. It is not that you solve the problem right away, but you need that moment of openness, a moment of touching the basic goodness of others. Pacifying in that way might be instantaneous or it could be a long process. Sometimes it can happen like that, sometimes it takes a lifetime.

Enriching is noon; the image is that of a tree. If there is enough sun then it is eventually going to bear fruits. It is richness, it is golden. Enriching in Tibetan also means “expanding”; fundamentally you are expanding that openness that you had in the pacifying stage. It is a sense of confidence. Once you have opened up you begin to see. You see how rich the world is. And then something very interesting happens: once you see the richness of the world it is almost overwhelming. It is so rich, it is so much what it is, it is so pure, it is so much itself that you feel an incredible sadness because it also disappears right away. Then there is another moment of perception but that also disappears. It is fleeting, and you want to hang on to it. You could be so proud because you are having this great moment of perception but you can't: you have to let it go also. In working with others it is giving others the confidence to sustain their openness. One difficult moment is when you are getting into a situation where there is conflict or pain. You just want to pacify that situation. From the moment it is pacified, you almost feel comfortable and you do not want to push too far. You say, “Okay, what you have done right now is very good and I have done my share too so I can go back to sleep and you can go back to sleep and we will not ask any more questions”. We cannot go back to sleep, to habitual patterns, we need to sustain that openness. It's not about being comfortable.

Magnetizing is prajna. Basically you have taken your seat, you have opened up and you have seen, you have looked, so then you understand the situation. The image that we often have when we think of magnetizing is to grab something, to get something for yourself. Here things naturally come to you because you understand. In terms of working with the situation it is the notion of auspicious coincidence. Whatever arises is completely workable. I am always quite amazed when I am with the Sakyong because he can take any situation, whatever arises, and use it as a teaching for the person that he is relating to. This is because he is constantly present and the world is always available, the world is always there to nurture us if there is openness.

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“L'un est L'autre”

Extracts from the presentation by Michel Dubosi of the Peacemaker Circle France

Simon La Haye: It's my great pleasure and honor to introduce Mr. Michel Dubois, who is a long time student of meditation. He studied Zen when his life brought him to San Francisco many years ago, where he actually happened to be in the same Zendo with David Schneider. He studied with Genpo Roshi and Bernard Glassman Roshi. Thanks to the inspiration of Bernie Glassman Roshi in the Peacemaker Community he started to work with homeless people in Paris.

Michel Dubois: The organization we put together is called *L'un est L'autre*. It means *the one is the other*. We were a group of Buddhists, Freemasons, Christians and also Muslims and we just discovered that we wanted to work together with our diversity and look upon our diversity as a richness. We looked for a name for a while and we came up with *L'un est L'autre* and we loved it. The goal is to work with homeless people to provide meals that are balanced and delicious, to cook for people as though we were receiving our best friends for a dinner... We are working from this point of view of non-separation.

I want to tell you a story. It's summer on a beach. There is a little girl, who has a little bucket and she seems to put things in the bucket. Then she runs from the sand to the water and throws the bucket into the sea. Then she runs back up the shore again, picks up something, runs to the water and throws whatever is in the bucket into the sea. An adult sees her and asks, "What are you doing?" "Oh, you see," says the little girl, "there are all those starfish stranded on the shore. I carry them back home." He says, "Ah, that's very well but there are thousands of them, millions of them on the beach. You will never succeed." The little girl replies, "I know. But for the ones I carry back home, it makes all the difference in the world."

So, we are a very small organization and we are doing the best we can. We are making a difference for the people in Paris who are coming to have meals on Sunday night. We started this to have a meal on Sunday because it's a day where there is a deficit of free meals in Paris and some of the people have told us that for them it was making a big difference because they like the way we are doing it and I don't know what is going to be our next step. We are trying to serve a second meal and a third meal and a fourth meal and a fifth meal every week, so people can feel that they actually belong to this world and that they are not separated from us.

It's been one step after the other into the unknown and it feels good. In my own experience it opens my heart. Something that we discover little by little is that when we start to give a little we discover that we can give a little more and more and more and more. So, the more we give the more we discover that there is more to give. And at the same time we also discover that there is no giver and no recipient. Thus we give form, we give a body to the wonderful teachings that we have received on emptiness, which also means no separation. And somewhat my heart gets tenderised and my relationship with the universe gets tenderised. I like the expression that I heard from Simon when he was here he was speaking about 'the tender heart of sadness' and I understand that this is really a Shambhala expression and I really can relate to that expression. I'm looking upon this practice of serving as a practice itself rather than something I do to be a better Buddhist. Serving is a wonderful practice of non-separation and I think that is the tender heart of sadness.

I want to tell you another story. A few years ago I had a conversation with the vice- president of an organization in France that brings together Jews, Christians and Muslims as the common inheritors of Abraham. He told me that hospitality is the essence of the Book. He said that Abraham was in conversation, in deep contemplation, with the One that Cannot be Named, with the Unknowable, when he saw in the distance a group of travelers. He told the Unknowable, "I'm sorry to interrupt, but I have something urgent to do." He went to the

travelers to attend to them and he made them sit under the trees, giving them water, welcoming them and having them rest before proceeding to his tent. Meanwhile he gave orders to his people to kill the best calf and to prepare a feast. It is said that his tent was open to the four directions, so that any travelers could come in.

Those travelers happened to be the Archangels. It's not a stroke of luck that Abraham gave the hospitality to the Archangels who were sent by God. Abraham was seeing every traveler, every being, as being sent by god.

In other words, each and everyone of the persons we serve - and some of them might be quite unpleasant and they may be difficult persons and they may be a pain in the ass - to see each and everyone of them has the embodiment of the tender heart of sadness, I think this is practicing reality.

Most people we serve are not people living in the street, maybe 60 % of them are originated from Kabyle from Algeria and another 20 % are from Algeria, the others are French, Chinese, some people from Eastern Europe, more or less there is a majority of people from North Africa.

There was one guy last Sunday who came to talk to me and said, "Do you remember me?" As I started talking to him there was a feeling of tenderness, of no separation, we reconnected. We talked for about an hour and then I had to leave to clean the containers and things. He started to tell me his story and spoke about forty-five minutes -- what a wonderful being: I could see his emotional intelligence was resonating and there was a big synchronicity between us. I don't know what is going to be the next step of our relationship, I don't know if he is going to be here next Sunday, I expected to see him but I really don't know. Sometimes you connect with someone and you don't know why.

One of the blessings of this practice have been to bring people from different sanghas, different religions, or no religion together to share this genuine heart of sadness, to that has been a blessing to provide this opportunity.

Question: I listened to you and I perceived that there are times when you first jump and then think.

M. Dubois: That's the way I function. I don't recommend it [Laughter] -- this creates plenty of problems. I don't want you to think that I don't think. But I tend to think about something other than what is happening. Nevertheless I just want to tell you that even when you are extremely dysfunctional you can still give. So I'm not inviting you to be as dysfunctional as I am but to be yourself. This has to be the starting point, the genuine heart of sadness.

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"This wound"

The participants in the program and the staff of Dechen Chöling went to the nearby national war memorial at the village of Oradour-sur-Glane. This was the site of a horrific massacre in the final phase of the war, in which all but six of the villagers were put to death. We placed a peace vase (Tashi Terbum) on the grounds, as part of a project conceived by His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche to place these consecrated vases in places all over the world, including sites of extreme aggression and human suffering. Afterwards, there was an exchange of experiences that was summed up by President Reoch:

Over the past two days we have deepened our experience of entering the hell realm. Someone said that entering the remains of the village of Oradour was literally like walking

through a charnel ground. It was like entering a sadhana. Someone else echoed this by saying they felt they had entered a temple. I certainly felt like this: I could not have walked into those ruins without bowing. Not bowing out of sadness. This is an incredible field of teaching. Someone said it was a great honour to be there and to be present at the moment that we placed the peace vase in the earth of that place.

Afterwards a very practical person asked: did placing that vase actually do any good? It's important to remember precisely how the vase came to be there: it stems directly from the decision of Prince Siddhartha to leave his palace and go out completely on his own into the forest, and to arise from his meditation only when he had resolved, as best he could, the dilemma of human suffering. Sometimes we forget that in this dark age of materialism: we think it is only a yellow vase filled with stuff.

In the same way that this was a place of great teaching, someone said that they had truly experienced the extraordinary fragility of life. That was echoed by the person who noticed how everything was changing: their projections about the place, their feelings, their understanding. Even at the end it was hard to know what to think because we had all thought so many things. Even the weather was a mirror of that changing quality with the clouds, sunlight and rain.

At the same time, it was a place of great pain. We decided we would go there and soak ourselves in that pain. Amazingly, as we soaked ourselves something changed. When we rest with pain, it changes and becomes harder to locate. Something very powerful arises. Michel Dubois of the peacemaker circle of France stood with me in the ruins of the church where the women and children had been massacred. He told me that he has meditated at Auschwitz six times. He told me: "My deepest experience of each of those six meditations, and increasingly so, is of the intense love that was expressed in that place." That's hard to explain in ordinary logic, but that can be understood by a contemplative community like ours.

This quality of the pain, the soaking and the love was poignantly expressed by someone else when they talked about "this European wound". The suffering from that wound long predates the Second World War, but it also will take hundreds of years to heal. When there is intense pain, we always have the choice to open or to close. Usually we tend to close up: Oradour is like that: there are no flowers, no bushes growing over it. It is a frozen place of memory. Several people said that was like a mirror of our own situation. We all have this stuck quality. We carry very strong, hidden perceptions about ourselves and each other and these events. As someone asked: "How can we diffuse the bomb of people's memories?" Generations and generations later, extraordinary conflicts can come up between people who have no idea that their mutual history is a problem. "How do we assume responsibility for our blood lineage and bear the karma of these situations?" asked someone else. When we ask deep questions like that, I would say we are opening up around our wounds. We begin to realize what extraordinary sensitivity we have to cultivate in our community towards each other. We don't even know exactly who has come into the room in terms of the long stream of their karmic formation.

Something of this realization was expressed by the person who said they were thankful they had been able to raise their children in the tradition of the Buddha because one of the greatest koans he gave to his followers was: "My greatest enemy is my greatest friend". We are particularly blessed in the Shambhala community to have the teachings of Lord Atisha who gave us a practical way of working with our enemies through the practice of the Lojong slogans. These deliberately invite us to reverse the psychic tendencies that produce a killing ground like Oradour.

“...this is what we are being trained for.”

The Shambhala Path of Social Action can't only be about action. If people want action, then they are free to do that however they wish. But there are some qualities that we have in our training that enable us not just to do ordinary charity work, but in my view to encounter and deal with extreme situations that others simply won't work with.

The first quality that we cultivate in our training is our attitude towards chaos. We are trained to sit on our gomdens and work with whatever personal chaos our karma has led to. Not to close down around it. Not to turn that wound into a closed scar. We train to go deeper, to feel it. We don't use fear as a way of avoiding chaos, but as a stepping stone into it. We work with the way that it arises, changes and dissolves and is often inexpressible. If we ourselves are not comfortable with chaos, then we cannot be a “lotus in the flames”. Everybody in our community, from their first meditation instruction, regardless of credentials, is training for that. It goes right down to the meditation instruction of not closing your eyes -- so that you can work with the resentment of feeling disturbed by other people in the shrine room. (laughter) These are the seeds of war. It's no different. One's view of how one should be and, more perniciously, of how others should be.

The second quality that we train in is patience. When Simon La Haye talked so beautifully about protector principle, he pointed out the importance of being able to go into something that is disturbing rather than exiting from it. And to stay there -- the practice of remaining with whatever is uncomfortable and people who are uncomfortable and places that make us uncomfortable. We get a lot of training in this: we specialize in the dathün! In our mandala we have to work with all the differences between people, with all the edges, all the conflicts, all the sandpapering that is going on all the time. We also have our profoundly irritating lineage of teachers who are constantly pulling the rug out from under us so that gradually we increasingly become capable of working with profound levels of uncertainty, even about our own identity. That's also available to people the moment they arrive in our centres!

The third quality we train in, you might call bravery. It takes many forms. We are told at the last minute that we have to lead a complicated practice. And, as with the Dorje Kasung, we just have to jump in and do it. We find a lot of that in Shambhala: just having to overcome hesitation and have our complete incompetence exposed. It fits perfectly with the wonderful statement in the Sakyong's *Treatise on Society and Organization*: “Imperfection is the fuel that enables us to generate genuine compassion.” We are roused to bravery in another way: we are invited to the extraordinary task of exchanging self and other. Our heroism is not the survival of the fittest. In the stories of the early lives of the Buddha, he offers his body as food for a hungry tigress. That is our understanding of bravery and heroism. We invite people to manifest extreme bravery by offering them the path of the bodhisattva. We offer them the bodhisattva vow, even before they have managed to get to stage one of shamatha – where one can rest the mind on the breath continuously without a break for twenty-one breaths! And what a vow – the undying commitment over endless life times to be, as Vimalakirti says, “the lotus in the flame”.

The fourth quality I believe is inherent in our training has to do with going beyond appearances. This is the opposite of the “have a nice day” approach. Instead our approach is: “have the courage to go beyond appearances”. This is our training. We start to ask ourselves: “What is actually being experienced?” “Who is having this experience?” How could Michel Dubois say that after meditating in one of the world's most reviled killing grounds that he always experienced the intense love that had arisen in that place? From the very beginning of our training we are invited to see that what appears solid and real is more like woven fabric. As we practise the cloth becomes threadbare; it opens up so that we can see the light through the strands.

This is why I believe that talking about creating enlightened society is not something separate from Shambhala. I don't see it as an optional extra. I believe this is what we are being trained for.