

## Citizenship in Shambhala

This submission addresses the topic of how people become involved with Shambhala.

The questions have been asked: “What is the membership model for Shambhala” and “What path do we offer people once they have entered Shambhala (so they don’t leave)?”

I think this requires an examination of both the guiding vision and the current reality to rediscover what we mean by “membership” and what we mean by “path.”

### THE VISION OF CITIZENSHIP IN SHAMBHALA

The principles we enunciate and embody—even if imperfectly—resonate with really large numbers of people on some level or another, and what we’re finding is that people have been coming in, not so much as they used to, looking for enlightenment or transcendence or getting off the wheel of existence, but because they just want to live good human lives, and to be able to work with their ordinary domestic situations. They want to realize the potential for a good human life and a good human society that they intuit already exists, somewhere. Shambhala resonates with that deep-seated longing, and they sense the possibility, here, for that longing to be realized.

To me this is evidence that the principles and qualities revealed in the Shambhala teachings reside in the hearts of all people, and that when those principles and qualities are embodied—again, even imperfectly—the kingdom of Shambhala is manifested and awakening human beings have a natural desire to participate.

In 1995, at Joining Heaven and Earth, the Shambhala Kingdom was publicly proclaimed with the enthronement of Sakyong Mipham. Subsequently, at the 2000 Kalapa Assembly, the Sakyong removed all restrictions on open discussion about the existence of the Kingdom of Shambhala. In his *Memorial on the Shambhala Lodge Transmission*, the Sakyong said, “. . . within the realm of Shambhala (our organization and its affiliated centers), we have the basis of the inspiration of this Shambhala Kingdom. We have members of a society, and in 1995 His Holiness Penor Rinpoche empowered the Sakyong as Sakyong and thus King of Shambhala. We must see what we can do now. Where the future takes us, we do not know.”

It seems that, without us particularly realizing it or planning it, we’ve become a Shambhala society—or the Shambhala kingdom, to be more direct. That means to me that the model of membership we should be using is one of *citizenship in a society*. We should be thinking in terms of immigration and citizenship as our model for including people, rather than entry into some kind of spiritual organization.

Citizenship is automatically inclusive of everyone who shares our vision in whatever form it takes in their lives, regardless of their religion, their age, their profession, their social status, their ethnicity or anything else.

What they are committing themselves to is their birthright as human beings and to the path of uncovering that potential among others who are doing the same.

I believe, therefore, that we need to present ourselves quite straightforwardly as a society, and to magnetize and engage people on that level.

This approach, or shift of emphasis, is consistent with the Dorje Dradul's vision and mission of creating the Shambhala kingdom as a container both for personal fulfillment and for the revitalization and continuity of genuine spiritual traditions. It seems to me that, since we have become disciples and subjects of the Dorje Dradul and his successor, Sakyong Mipham, the highest expression of warrior bodhisattva activity for us in this time is to manifest this kingdom.

### THE PATH OF BECOMING A CITIZEN OF SHAMBHALA

It seems that we need to provide prospective and new citizens with the means to uplift their lives, and even in small ways to manifest Shambhala principles and qualities directly in their lives. I think we should take a lot of the practical teachings that we so far have saved for our more advanced programs—Kalapa Assembly, Warrior Assembly and so on—and push them up to the front, so that when people become citizens they learn things they can apply immediately to their lives, such as Court principle, natural hierarchy, finding one's seat—all of those things that are largely intuitive, if presented properly. We could make a lot of what we do—the real heart and core stuff—available up front, just as the Vidyadhara did when he first started teaching Buddhism. If you look at the 1973 Seminary transcripts, they're the thickest, and it was the first seminary. The Shambhala dharma could be presented just as early.

In practical terms, one would initially study Shambhala vision and principles, and would be introduced to lungta-raising practices. We have an extensive body of visionary and practical teachings—from many human traditions—on how to be fully human and how to be a member of society. The Acharyas and others could examine everything available on the topic and put together a syllabus on citizenship that could be applied from beginner to advanced levels of study and practice, and to the teaching and training of families and young people. This would include Kalapa Assembly transcripts, talks to the Lodge and the Kasung, and the Dekyong Manual, which contains talks by the Vidyadhara and the Regent that do not appear anywhere else. In addition, some version of the rites of warriorship currently undergone by our youth in formal programs could be developed for older people, so that they experience some kind of fresh start to their lives through a ceremonial entry into a profound and brilliant reality.

At some point, prospective citizens take the Shambhala Oath and become full citizens. I don't think this needs to depend on what levels of Shambhala Training they have completed, but rather on their intuitive connection and their commitment in terms of work and money—both of which imply an intimate and personal relationship with the Shambhala community and its administration, and a sense of responsibility for the society's perpetuation.

Upon becoming a citizen, one receives a Shambhala passport, which is one's entrée into all things Shambhalian. This isn't something jokey, but could actually become a record of one's involvement, as the Vidyadhara originally intended it to be. At the same time, it marks one as a distinct person in a distinct society—which may not have a distinct land base (as yet), but which is nonetheless manifest, and cohesive. This speaks to the peculiar Shambhala twist, that every citizen is a monarch who manifests the Shambhala realm spontaneously where and whenever they happen to be.

As to the question of Buddhism, or Shambhala Buddhism; ironically, a lot of the people who come in through the very large and open Shambhala gate often end up going to Seminary, because they are exposed to the buddhadharma when they come in. That may not have been their intention, but without anyone manipulating the situation or conning anyone, something happens. That doesn't mean to say that all citizens should or will become Buddhists: there's no requirement actually, there's just a spontaneous connection for many people. I don't think it is something we need be concerned about.

I think I'd better leave it there for now. Obviously there needs to be discussion.

With respect, in the Vision,

Nick Wright