

Acharya Protocol

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche has empowered each Acharya to represent him and the Kagyü, Nyingma, and Shambhala lineages he holds. The Sakyong chose these individuals because of their knowledge, wisdom, and commitment to the extensive teaching required throughout the mandala. You will be establishing the environments in which your visiting Acharya will reside and teach. All arrangements should reflect consideration and respect for our teachers and the teachings they represent.

If you have invited a Shambhala Training Director or senior teacher in the past, the arrangements for Acharyas will be similar. These guidelines are provided for those who are not yet experienced with visiting teachers.

You May Invite an Acharya to

- Give any Shambhala, Buddhist, or Nalanda program they are empowered to teach. Certain Acharyas specialize in particular aspects of the teachings; they will let you know if they are best suited to teach what you are asking.
- Give Refuge Vow
- Give Bodhisattva Vow
- Give vows as the representative of the Sakyong (acceptance of office, retirement from office, etc.)
- Give reading transmissions (*lung*s) for ngöndro practices; guru yogas such as *The Rain of Blessings*, *Dharmasagara*, *The Profound Guru Yoga*; and for recent practices written by the Sakyong, such as *The Primordial Rigden*, *Powerful Activity Phurba*, *The Wheel of Wisdom*, *White Tara*, *Sadhana of Luminosity*, and *Ground Lungta*.
- Conduct ceremonies such as weddings and funeral rituals (*Sukhavatis*).

Inviting an Acharya

Do not hesitate to approach any of the Acharyas with your teaching request; we cannot cover all the possibilities here, but the first step toward an Acharya's visit is simply to find out who is available to conduct the teaching you would like to sponsor.

- Check the Acharya's schedule at www.shambhala.org/teachers/.
- Contact Lin Waters, the Acharyas' secretary, at lin-waters@comcast.net, for assistance and contact information.
- When you have established one or two sets of dates that will work for your center, send an e-mail inquiry to one or more Acharyas to find out if they are available to present the program you have in mind.
- After an Acharya has expressed interest, discuss details of the program and settle all the dharmic, administrative, and financial requirements. For an extended program, it will be helpful for your center to have coordinators for the program as well as the household. It is generally best if only one person communicates with the Acharya about the details of the visit, so that communication is coordinated and simple.
- You can download a picture and biographical information on each Acharya from the Shambhala website.
- When an invitation is extended to an Acharya for a potential teaching visit, please notify the Rusung, the local Dorje Kasung representative. Please keep the Rusung notified of all pertinent details concerning the Acharya teaching visit.

Program Coordination

It will be very helpful to the Acharya if the center can send the following information prior to the visit.

- The name(s) of the host/hostess, their address, phone and/or cell numbers, and email address
- A list of the community members
- A list of the leadership of the center and their positions
- A list of staff for the program
- A list of program participants; this should be updated as registrations are received.
- A proposed schedule for the program and overall visit
- Any special requests for interviews, lungs, etc.
- The name(s) of those who will be meeting the Acharya at the airport, and contact information in case of travel delays or a missed connection.

At the Event

- When the Acharya is presenting a program or officiating at a ceremony, he/she should be escorted by Kasung.
- Prior to the event, find out how the Acharya would like to be introduced and what practice materials may be needed, for instance, for a lhasang or stroke practice.
- The Acharya will have travel cushion covers. If he/she wishes to use them, they should be installed before the Acharya arrives at the event.
- During the event, the Acharya should be offered the beverage of his/her choice.
- If an Acharya is present at an event but not officiating, Kasung need not be provided. An introduction may be appropriate, especially if other introductions are being made.

- Standing when an Acharya enters to give teaching and when he/she leaves is appropriate for receiving teachings at this level. Offering khatas for blessings is reserved for Rinpoches.

Hospitality Coordination

Travel arrangements

- If the Acharya is arriving by plane or other public transport, arrange for them to be met by Kasung or others in appropriate dress and driven to the center or residence.
- If the Acharya will need local transportation during the visit, it should be provided in the same manner.

Housing

- Depending on the situation and length of stay, you might appoint a “household coordinator” to arrange the residence and meal service.
- Housing should be as nice as possible; flowers should be in place when the Acharya arrives.
- If you can offer practice space at the residence, ask the Acharya what supplies or other materials may be needed (stroke practice materials, etc.)
- If possible, provide Internet access, especially during extended programs.

Meal service

Pre-visit discussions should cover whether the Acharya has any special dietary requirements and how he/she prefers meals to be handled. If the Acharya is familiar with your community, he/she may be invited to take meals with various members, or community members may provide meals at the Acharya’s residence. In this case, the household coordinator should prepare a schedule prior to the visit.

Honoraria and Teaching Gifts

At present, none of the Acharyas are supported by Shambhala International. The ways in which they support themselves vary; some teach full time, some have full time jobs and teach on top of that. Keep in mind that some Acharyas may be giving up their regular income to conduct a teaching program and that they are extending themselves by coming to your center to teach. Travel is very taxing, especially over long distances.

In general, the costs of travel, housing, and food should be covered by the center, and an honorarium based on the length of the program and/or the number of events should be offered. In addition, teaching gifts from program students are customary.

The time an Acharya devotes to any program includes preparation time, travel time, and follow up, as well as actual teaching time. It may also include making travel arrangements, providing information for advertising, and program coordination if other teachers are involved, for example, in Maitri Programs.

The following figures are based on the "Acharya Livelihood Model," developed by Connie Brock in collaboration with a number of people (see attached document). Acharyas could devote their time fully to teaching and practice if they received \$200 for each full day of program preparation, teaching, and travel. This level of pay reflects North American expenses and currencies. For Acharyas teaching in other countries and regions, including Europe, different standards apply, for which you could contact the office of Shambhala Europe, or the appropriate person for your region. If this suggested guideline is beyond the reach of a smaller center or study group, you may make a different arrangement directly with the Acharya. All the Acharyas will make adjustments depending on the requirements of the program, their individual circumstances, and the financial realities of the centers and countries they are visiting. Smaller centers may be able to reduce the travel expenses of a program by coordinating with other centers to expand an Acharya's itinerary.

Calculating the honorarium

- A weekend program is the equivalent of five working days: at least one day for preparation, two days for travel, and two days for teaching.
- A 10-day program with two weekends and classes during the week = 15 days. A recurring class with up to four hours of travel = one day per class
- A recurring local class with no significant travel = a half-day per class.
- For other scenarios and the overall view and logic, see the Acharya Livelihood Model.

Each Acharya will have different circumstances and requirements, so discussions prior to the visit should include how the Acharya's expense for travel to your center will be paid or reimbursed. The amount of the Acharya's honorarium for teaching should also be established prior to his/her arrival. If the Acharya is traveling to several centers in the area, you may be able to spread a major expense among several groups. In this case, work out the arrangements with any other centers prior to the visit.

Offerings to the Acharya from people who attend teachings or receive a lung or vow are customary and are not considered part of the honorarium. It is customary for these offerings to be collected and formally presented to the Acharya, along with the honorarium, at the end of the major program. For participants, a guideline for offerings is \$10-\$20 for lungs. These also are collected before and presented after each ceremony. There is no required teaching gift for either the refuge or bodhisattva vows. A guideline for the Bodhisattva gift is that it should have an intrinsic value and that it is something that the "Bodhisattva to be" finds difficult to give up; therefore money is appropriate, but the amount depends on the person.

There are now 32 Acharyas empowered to teach throughout the Shambhala mandala. Each of them has different preferences and styles, so the keyword for centers inviting them is

f l e x i b i l i t y .

Last updated 9/23/2005

Acharya Livelihood Document

Introduction

This document presents a proposal to address the need to provide a reliable, basic level of livelihood to the Shambhala acharyas. Livelihood in this context includes income to meet the need for living expenses, for retirement planning, and for basic medical insurance.

There is another project underway which is addressing finances, funding and fundraising for Shambhala International. This proposal is considered to be complimentary to that project.

View

Acharyas are an essential part of the richness and wealth of Shambhala. They play a vital role in nurturing and propagating the teachings. The Shambhala Community has an obligation to provide them with a means for livelihood.

Definitions and Assumptions

For the purposes of this document, sources of income are broken down into three categories:

Acharya Teaching Income

- honoraria for teaching within the Shambhala Mandala

Other Regular Income

- salaried income within the Shambhala mandala (i.e. employed by Shambhala International, or an affiliate, including practice centers and urban centers)
- salaried income outside the mandala
- royalties from books
- fee income for things other than teaching (e.g. translating, speaking engagements)
- Social Security and other retirement income

Note: Sources in this category may also include insurance and retirement benefits.

Casual Income

- gifts for performing non-teaching acharya services (e.g. vows, weddings)
- gifts for teaching within the Shambhala mandala

Base income is defined to be the total of Acharya Income and Other Regular Income.

For the purposes of this document, Acharya Teaching Income is defined to be:

- *full time* if more than \$30,000 per year
- *part time* if \$10,000 - \$30,000 per year
- *casual* if less than \$10,000 per year

Assumptions:

- Minimum base income guideline is \$40,000 per year (US), which would need to cover living expenses, insurance and retirement savings. Individual circumstances may vary, but this would be the guideline.
- Acharyas need time each year for personal practice and study (guideline is 8 weeks), as well as vacation time (guideline is 4 weeks). This leaves 40 weeks for teaching and other livelihood work.
- Time for teaching includes preparation time, travel time, and follow up as well as actual teaching time. It may also include travel arrangements, providing information for advertising, and other program coordination work.
- If travel is involved, a weekend program is the equivalent of 1 weeks work. (1 prep day, 2 travel days, 2 teaching days).

Some teaching work definitions and examples:

- A weekend program with travel = 1 work week
- A 10 day program with 2 weekends and classes during the week = 3 work weeks
- A recurring local class with commuting = 1 day per class
- A recurring local class with no significant travel = .5 day per class
- A dathun is 28 working days plus 2 travel days plus 3 days of preparation = 6.5 work weeks
- Sutrayana seminary = 7 work weeks

Recommendations

- 1) In light of the previous assumptions, the fee for acharya teaching needs to be \$1000 per week or \$200 per day. This would mean:
 - Full time acharya teaching work would be 30-40 weeks per year.
 - Part time would be 10-30 weeks per year.
 - Casual would be 10 or fewer weeks per year.
- 2) Centers could establish a relationship with a particular acharya who would teach regularly, offer vows, and do lungs. The acharya would also be a resource for a variety of community needs, including personal crises, practice issues, providing support to MI's, etc. The center would "sponsor" the acharya for a fixed amount each year (probably renegotiated each year) that would cover the work to be done by the acharya, including time spent between visits. Acharyas who are interested in this kind of arrangement could derive a substantial portion of acharya teaching income from such arrangements.

The primary source of funds for centers to pay for acharyas would be program revenue, i.e. the revenue stream for supporting the acharyas would come from the teaching itself.

Example: Minneapolis would like an acharya in residence once a year in the spring for a 10-day program, and a second weekend program every fall. This would be considered 4 weeks of teaching plus 3 days worth of other services (typically via phone), for a total of \$4600 per year. In order to break even (cover all costs including teaching, travel, publicity, etc), Minneapolis would need to average 20 students per weekend program at \$100 each, which would be quite workable.

- 3) Larger centers would still make a substantial profit at these honoraria rates, but smaller centers might not be able to bring in enough students to break even. These centers might do fundraising to make up the difference. But in many cases, this would still leave them short, and a "subsidy" would be needed. A subsidy pool could be established through Shambhala International, the funding for which could be addressed as part of the overall funding for SI. The subsidy pool would ensure small centers have access to acharyas without compromising the basic income level of the acharyas through reduced rates.

- 4) Wherever possible, acharyas who need insurance coverage would be included in group plans in order to get lower group rates. This would require setting up the acharya as an employee of the entity with the group plan (e.g. Shambhala International).

Obstacles and Antidotes

- 1) While there might be some interest in setting up geographical regions for “resident” acharyas, this presents a number of obstacles. Centers in a given region may not all want or be ready to support a common acharya. Regions like the Maritimes may lack sufficient resources to meet the financial requirements. Given the practical problems of scheduling, it’s unlikely a group of regional centers could actually schedule in a way to minimize travel, so that most trips would be single destination anyway. Allowing these relationships to develop organically would result in a “virtual” region of centers sharing an acharya, hopefully with some balance in the economic demographics.
- 2) Acharyas for whom center “residency” is not a good fit could continue to teach at the level (fulltime, part time or casual) they choose, but at the recommended rates. This would ensure the basic livelihood level and would avoid the creation of a 2-tier rate structure. Acharyas who feel they don’t need this level of income (are there any?) could simply donate excess honoraria to the funding pool for subsidizing small centers.
- 3) All centers struggle constantly to cover expenses. Those who are accustomed to using program revenue to cover monthly expenses might find this a very challenging model. But it is one that we can migrate to over time. ***For all centers, it means aligning the cost of teaching with the value of teaching, i.e. the consumers of the service pay for it.***
- 4) This rate structure might require centers to charge more for programs than what they have done historically. But students can be told that their program fees are supporting a precious resource for the community altogether, providing an opportunity for students to experience the joy of generosity rather than resentment for the cost. Again, this is something that centers can migrate to over time.
- 5) The speed with which centers can migrate to a new rate structure may not be adequate to address all of the current cases of below subsistence livelihood. Emerging regions, such as South America may not be able to fund acharyas at the recommended rate. In these cases it may be necessary to provide some form of temporary, transition funding along the lines of what is being done this year by the Trust.

Next Steps

Set up teleconference session(s) for interested centers. Send them this proposal for review prior to the teleconference. Use this as the basis for determining, when and how to implement this model.

Items needing further work:

- Setting up insurance coverage: which entities can do this, how much would it cost, what is required to set it up?
- “Resident” acharyas for urban centers: recommendations for setting up such an arrangement, a model “contract”, the process for disengagement, etc.
- Create a handbook for centers to use when bringing in an acharya. This would help minimize the amount of time the acharya needs to spend on pre-visit arrangements.