

December 29, 2019

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SHAMBHALA

To the Shambhala Community —

As the Sakyong expressed in his recent letter, during the past year he has received numerous supplications from students, including a large group of 125 students who have directly requested the Rigden Abhisheka in order to continue on their Vajrayana path. Earlier this fall, the Board received a request from Dechen Chöling (DCL) that they wished to support those students by inviting the Sakyong to confer a Rigden Abhisheka in June 2020.

The Board has considered this request seriously. We have sought advice and had extensive discussions among ourselves, and have come to a decision to join with DCL's invitation to the Sakyong to confer the Rigden Abhisheka in June 2020.

We are writing to provide further background and detail about the decision-making process which led us to support this invitation.

As individual practitioners, students and community members, not all members of the Board have the same feelings about the way forward. However, as a Board, we have arrived at a consensus behind this decision.

We acknowledge there will be a wide range of opinions in the community in reaction to this decision. We believe it is important to support students in our community who are requesting to continue on their practice path. We hope that by inviting the Sakyong to confer this pivotal dot on the path, these students will be able to continue their commitment to the Shambhala teachings. We understand that the Sakyong will seriously consider this request to confer the Rigden Abhisheka.

At the same time, we are also working to support the paths of all students

in the Shambhala community. Within our lineage, the Shambhala and Buddhist teachings and contemplative traditions offer a large treasury of knowledge and practices. It is our heartfelt wish that we all can go forward to deepen our understanding and strengthen our individual and group practices together.

Meeting Between the Sakyong and the Shambhala Board

In late October, the Board requested a meeting with the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo about this and other topics. We had the meeting by Zoom and they joined from their residence in Nepal. A key part of this exchange was the presentation of Shambhala's new draft Code of Conduct, which the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo had reviewed and expressed support for this work.

At this October meeting, we discussed a number of topics including:

- The Board's wish that the Sakyong communicate with the community and that many members of the community wish to hear more from him.
- How best to respond to the requests from students who want him to offer Vajrayana teachings, in particular those in the community who have made supplications for a Rigden Abhisheka in Europe as well as the implications of various approaches on how to respond to these requests.
- Progress in the area of Care and Conduct and the direction of the Process Team's Care and Conduct draft.
- The Sakyong and the Sakyong Wangmo's support of the draft of the new Code of Conduct composed by the Process Team that they had received and reviewed prior to the meeting.
- The relationship of the community and the Shambhala organization to the Shambhala lineage and the role of the lineage in Shambhala.

The Board appreciated being able to meet directly with the Sakyong and

Sakyong Wangmo and felt that this recent meeting was a valuable step in terms of working on a path forward. We look forward to continuing our dialogue.

Board Considerations

The Board considered the students' request for the Sakyong to confer the Rigden Abhisheka seriously, has sought advice, and has had extensive discussions among ourselves. We would like to share our considerations with you. Please note that these are the result of our own discussion, and we do not presume to speak for the Sakyong and the Sakyong Wangmo. In our discussions, among other things, we considered:

- The Sakyong is the lineage holder of Shambhala and the author of the Scorpion Seal curriculum and path based on the terma of the Druk Sakyong (the Sakyong's father, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche).
- He alone can confer the Rigden Abhisheka.
- The community, the Process Team and the Board are all working on initiatives to promote a safer community. However, this work is nowhere near finished. Much more needs to be done and sustained. It is our hope that by trying to involve and engage the Sakyong and the Sakyong Wangmo in the various processes, it will be healthier and more clarifying than a separate, even parallel, process. In this regard, the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo support the work of the Board and the community on the new Code of Conduct and will be part of this process.
- As we communicated [in our letter to the community on August 21](#), the Sakyong has delegated the management and supervision of Shambhala USA and Shambhala Canada for a two-year period ending in October 2021. This has not changed. The Board values and protects this independence as it has enabled us to promote greater clarity and, hopefully, trust around issues of finances, accountability and fiduciary responsibility.

The Board looks forward to continued community dialogue on what it means to be Shambhalian and how to manifest as a Shambhala community

together. This applies to all community members inclusively, whether they wish to study with the Sakyong directly, as the head of the lineage, at this time or not. The Board is steadfast in holding to the basic approach that we must learn from our mutual experience, engage in dialogue, and then act skillfully together to heal wounds and reconcile differences. We believe we can move forward as members of the Shambhala lineage manifesting as a stronger, kinder, more caring and inclusive practice community. It is our intention to allow space for all points of view within our community and to support all Shambhala students in their path.

As always, you can reach us at board@shambhala.org with questions, concerns and comments.

Sincerely,

The Shambhala Board

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