

## Sharing Shambhala Part 1 - October 8<sup>th</sup> 2021

The first of two consecutive series of broad community conversations, having to do with sharing. WE are the Shambhala sangha, and we include individuals with different views, experiences and aspirations. Can we share Shambhala with others who may have different views?

The idea of this first series is to really deeply listen to each other's views around this question by exchange in a breakout group of approximately the same views – and after that compare experiences. The starting question for all 3 types of breakout groups was:

**What is your heart wish, or deep longing, with respect to your relationship with the Sakyong and the Shambhala community?"**

The conversations in the breakout groups have not been recorded. The general conversation that followed started with participants' summaries of what transpired in each of the 3 groups, followed by plenary exchange.

Below you find a summary of the plenary part of the October 8th conversation. There were 16 participants.

### Summary

All participants had the choice of being in the group they felt most affinity with:

- A group committed to studying with the Sakyong
- An 'in between' group, coming up with the term 'ambivalent' as a label
- A group not currently wanting to study with the Sakyong

Obviously views differed not only between the groups, but also within each group. The range is broad and does not lend itself to putting people easily in a 'closed box'. Still, some trends emerge; some are specific for a group and others turn out to be shared fairly widely.

### Those committed to studying with the Sakyong

They love the Sakyong's present teachings, and would love them to be available more widely to everyone.

A question coming up for them, is how people with a different view would see the issue of spreading the dharma teachings in a different way, also in regard to the present negotiations going on between the Board and the Potrang:

- o *'what could they possibly be talking about? What are they coming up with?'*
- o *'without the clarity of a central Teacher, what is there to hold?'*

However, the longing to let the teachings spread more broadly gave rise to looking at the possibilities of being more inclusive – and there turned out to be broad consensus to start looking for ways that could make that happen – the start of a new and as yet unfinished exchange:

- o *'The wish for harmony and mutual courtesy I wish to work together with, rather than anything else. And that sense of inclusiveness was very evident.'*
- o *'But it becomes a question of how could we accommodate and work together'*

### **Those not currently wanting to study with the Sakyong**

This group clearly is struggling with the feeling of harm having been caused that has been widespread and not been adequately acknowledged:

- o *'I've been in career environments where sexual harassment occurred. And now we're not putting up with that'*
- o *'Yeah, I found that the term the enabling -- the sort of an enabling situation that was, unfortunately too much part of the culture'*

And – in a way broader, and considering the other group:

- o *'concerned that Sakyong students at least giving the appearance that the Sakyong is being placed above the Dharma'*

Still, also in this group, having acknowledged negative feelings and concerns, a clear wish emerges for a shared path quality:

- o *'Even in the midst of the current situation that we're in, people are still joining, accessing the teachings, newly taking refuge and all these other things. So the fact that there is something that is sustained. And that there's a very strong heart wish for the community to be able to manifest in that way and continue in that way. So, just in order not to have it all sound negative, I don't think I don't think that's really the flavor. It actually, I think was a very positive flavor, even though there are certain concerns that were expressed.'*
- o *'There is an element of -- your path is your business. It's each individual to decide for themselves. I think there's the sense of the large umbrella, the larger umbrella.'*

### **The 'ambivalent' group**

Seeing both sides allows for the perspective to develop more clearly, so the view of this group is easily summarized by a few of their quotes:

- o *'our ground had to do with values of integrity, compassion, cult versus culture. Things of that order – [it shows] communication as being our primary value'.*

This also allows for a broader and more dharmic level to emerge:

- o *'One possibility of having other teachers just enrich the situation so that we don't stay stuck in the situation. And one of the issues of compassion is to instead of just staying stuck on the question of whether Sakyong, committed sexual abuse and whether people were sexually abused is to spend more time having compassion towards sexual abusers and people who are sexually abused.' [...]*

*'And the fruition is to have compassion be connected to basic goodness. And to have a sense of humor to get beyond frustration and get to have a sense of humor about the situations that we're dealing with.'*

## **General conclusion and further perspective**

The differences in view are summed up in the following exchange:

- o I still am really hoping to hear how students not with the Sakyong would like to experience Shambala. I hear a lot of what they don't want, but not really getting a sense of what they do want.*
- o Sorry. But, you know, I just get a sense of feeling like, how could you possibly be a student of the Sakyong when he's done this and this and this, and I don't see how that's going to turn into: we can all share the same place to practice.*

Another speaker replied:

- o So here's something, [...] this is from the Sacred Path of the Warrior. Okay? It says, with the, with the great problems now facing human society, it seems increasingly important to find simple and non sectarian ways to work with ourselves and to share our understanding with others. Okay. That's my version of Shambala. And, and it's a sense of radiation, you know that it actually goes in many ways. Not only people are Buddhists, but who are non Buddhist, not only people who are students of the Sakyong, but students of other Buddhist teachers, that were a very strong community.*
- o I'm so sorry that the shit hit the fan the way it did. But we needed some fresh air in the environment, because it really was becoming very kind of a hypnotic environment in our sangha, because we had, we had some strong sense of like a party line or a particular vision. But the majority of our members were actually not students of the Sakyong. And they were sort of like, just pay your dues and like, what, what? So for me, Shambala is a radiant quality of going out into the world and, and basically, these limiting sense of circling the wagons just doesn't radiate, you know, like very well.*

The general feeling from all different groups – judging by the departure remarks - seems to be positive goodwill and that there is a way forward – to find a path for the Shambhala community to continue to be together:

- o So in terms of what people want to see, what we want to see is an inclusive open-armed community like that, that appreciates and shares the teachings as widely as possible.*
- o I'm hopeful that we can have a sangha that's, I'm going to paraphrase inclusive, open, welcoming to all, and safe.*

The way to do that would have to be explored in a follow up exchange:

- o 'because we just began to move toward the deeper water of this discussion. And this, this forum has held so far. So perhaps a slightly deeper discussion is possible. Sometime someday, I hope.'*

The answer:

- o *'Oh, you're gonna have that opportunity. Thank you. Because in November, we have more of these meetings scheduled, and the November meetings are going to focus on what do you want Shambala to look like in the future? No. So the meeting that well, you'll get invitations.'*

So that's exactly what has been planned already, with as one of the central questions:

- o *'How do we hold together a very broad umbrella? What's the center pole of the umbrella? How do we relate to that?'*

# 2021.08.10 Sharing Shambhala Part 1

## transcript and chat

Fri, 10/8 9:37PM • 29:25

### SUMMARY KEYWORDS

feeling, people, shambala, teachings, question, group, students, path, hear, expressed, teachers, compassion, sense, began, unsure, sangha, continue, report

00:10

I'm just jogging my brain, this introduction to the plenary, am I doing that?

00:18

Yes, you will go on the one.

00:21

Okay. So what we would like is at least at first, one person from each group to give an overview, or a succinct piece of what themes arose in your group, not feeling like you have to mention every idea that was expressed, but at least for whoever's doing that summary, what, how you would characterize some of the main themes that arose. And if that could be done in a few minutes for each group, then when each group has had that on the table, then we'll open it up and let other people offer individual reflections from the group. So let's start with the group that is presently studying with the Sakyong. Who would like to be the report rapporteur? Is that what they say? Reporter reporting out from that group. I don't have the breakouts in front of me. So I don't know who you are. Well, I do now have it would be one of the 4 reporters.

01:43

I think [...] there as volunteering

01:51

Under the theme under the title not afraid to be a fool. So yes, the four of us are Sakyong students. Let's see. And some expressed their commitment to that path of teaching with the Sakyong. One wanting others to hear his teachings, his current teachings, which are brilliant, to discussing the negotiations briefly, as to what could they possibly be talking about? What are they coming up with? And, and we and then we began talking about what how could a center accommodate US and other people on this screen or in the world that are not Sakyong students or are brand new, or are on the fence or following Trungpa Rinpoche but not the Sakyong, etc, etc. And we think we'd only just began talking about that, what that might look like or feel like, if we could be cordial to each other friendly to each other. If we could agree on some way of having the shrine room look a little different, depending

on who was in it, which group or which practice was going on. In terms of thank's, in photos, we just scratched the surface of that topic. And I don't think anyone's going to change anyone's mind about whose path they're on or who they're following. But it becomes a question of how could we accommodate and work together? So if I missed something really, maybe somebody in the group could say something, but that's what I took just the very beginnings of that conversation.

04:31

Another person from that group: anything to add at this moment? I see you have put stuff in the chat too. Thank you.

04:53

Did you want to say anything?

04:55

Just because to add that there was definitely a feeling among all of us. I felt The wish for harmony and mutual courtesy I wish to work together with rather than anything else. And that sense of inclusiveness was very evident.

05:23

This is a good moment to go to the group that was described as not currently studying with the Sakyong. Who will be the reporter for that group.

05:38

And to go, that's a heartfelt wish expressed by a few folks was that the Sakyong recognize, own up to and apologize for the harm he is done. That's something that we all feel is really been holding us back. There were also expressed concerns about the folks who are like, who, who's concerned who are Sakyong students at least giving the appearance that the Sakyong is being placed above the Dharma.

06:21

And a couple of us women who have worked in careers, in my case now male dominated careers, etc. have been, I've been in environments where sexual harassment career occurred. And now we're not putting up with that. Period.

06:45

Again, that's about it unless, you want to add anything?

06:56

Well, I think the other elements were, on the other hand, the fact that I'm still sorry for the background noise, this is [...], that, you know, there is a continuation of, of people connecting and being inspired by the teachings. Even in the midst of the current situation that we're in, you know, people still joining me accessing the teachings, newly taking refuge and all these other things. So the fact that you're just talking about how there is something that is sustained. And that there's a, I think, a very strong heart wish for, for, you know, the community to be able to manifest in that way and continue in that way. So,

just in order not to have it all sound negative, I don't think I don't think that's really the flavor. It actually, I think was a very positive flavor, even though there are certain concerns that there were expressed.

08:05

There is an element of -- your path is your business. It's each individual to decide for themselves. I think there's the sense of the large umbrella, the larger umbrella.

08:21

Yeah. It doesn't have to be one way.

08:34

It helps in that group have particular thoughts to add to that overview of what came up in your group?

08:43

Well, one thing I would add is, I don't focus my disappointment just on the Sakyong, but on a systemic culture that people began to report on thankfully, a couple of years ago. That wasn't being noticed by the most senior practitioners, it was even being committed by the most senior practiced representatives of the Sangha. And so yeah, I think the care and conduct issue is what has affected me most but that I don't include it as just the Sakyong but I hold him responsible for not being able to understand how to administrate better if he didn't want that to happen.

09:44

Yeah, I found that the term the enabling the sort of an enabling situation that was, unfortunately too much part of the culture

10:09

So for now, is this a good moment to move to the group that we called unsure. But our challenge to that group was to come up with a better name. Because some were unsure about that names. Oh, I don't know. Who would like to report from that discussion of the people who landed in the group? that was in a group I participated in, it was called ambivalent, and I personally identified, that was easy for me to go to that title. But unsure may not hold the same magnetism as a level that did for me.

10:51

Why don't you say something just on a level rather than unsure? As I say again, [...] why don't you just call it unable, instead of unsure? able, unable unable?

11:07

I, I got it. I don't understand. And that's just fine. Anyone else want to report from the overview of conversation in that group?

11:27

[...] say something we can't hide, I can see you hiding behind those big glasses of yours. But that doesn't work anymore.

11:44

There were four or five other people in that group as well. We don't have to put [...] on. [...], you want to go ahead.

11:52

So I'll try. We covered a lot of different things. But if I were to summarize it, I think that our ground had to do with values or ground had to do with values of integrity, compassion, cult versus culture. Things of that order it communication. As, as being our primary values. Our path, we had an interesting path of one possibility of having other teachers just enrich the situation so that we don't get stay stuck in the situation. So the idea is not to be stuck. And one of the issues of compassion is to instead of just staying stuck on the question of whether Sakyong, committed sexual abuse and whether people were sexually abused is to spend more time having compassion towards sexual abusers and people who are sexually abused. So that that's, so we move forward with this topic rather than just stay in the same place. And the fruition is to have compassion be connected to basic goodness. And to have a sense of humor to get beyond frustration and get to have a sense of humor about the situations that we're dealing with.

13:26

sense of humor sounds good. Well, there's a lot that's been said also in the chat and so in the remaining six, seven minutes for this mall, this section, I would invite anyone who just wants to offer final thoughts or things that you felt coming up that have not yet been said. [...]? Yeah, please.

14:05

Yeah, I still am really hoping to hear how people who, um, alright, students not with the Sakyong would like to experience Shambala. Um, like, I hear a lot of what they don't want, but not really getting a sense of what they do want. And not to make it awesome to them.

14:25

Sorry. But, you know, just I get a sense of feeling like, oh, how could you possibly be a student of the Sakyong when he's done this and this and this, and I don't see how that's going to turn into. We can all share the same place to practice.

15:02

[...] please.

15:05

So here's here's something, [...] this is from the Sacred Path of the Warrior. Okay? It says, with the, with the great problems now facing human society, it seems increasingly important to find simple and non sectarian ways to work with ourselves and to share our understanding with others. Okay. That's my version of Shambala. And, and it's a sense of radiation, you know that it actually goes in many ways. Not only people are Buddhists, but who are non Buddhist, not only people who are students of the

Sakyong, but students of other Buddhist teachers, that were a very strong community. And we and we actually teach each other as well.

So um, so yeah, I'm so sorry that the shit hit the fan the way it did. But we needed some fresh air in the environment, because it really was becoming very kind of a hypnotic environment in our sangha, because we had, we had some strong sense of like a party line or a particular vision. But the majority of our members were actually not students of the Sakyong. And they were sort of like, chopped liver or just pay your dues and like, what, what? So for me, Shambala is a radiant quality of going out into the world and, and basically, these limiting sense of like, circling the wagons is just doesn't radiate, you know, like very well. And, and I, I love the Sakyong and honestly, I have a long relationship with him. But um, and I think that what he's doing is great. I'm really glad that he has his students and an opportunity to do that. But Shambala is bigger than that, you know that it Shambala is meant to reach everybody, you know, and without any kind of litmus tests or you know, like, well, who do you believe in? What do you believe in? So that's my answer to your question.

17:37

Like, I could say a couple of words as well. Um, first of all, you know, I, I did Scorpion sail through level 10. So I was very much a student of the Sakyong that I had chosen to follow that particular path, as opposed to doing the [...], you know, continuing my vajrayogini etc. So I really put, you know, 10 years of effort into that path, and then this, you know, sort of implosion occurred. And it's not an easy choice to, you know, after that level of commitment. And, you know, I appreciate those teachings very much, they're still very much a part of me. So it was quite heartbreaking to see this happen. But I totally agree with what [...] said, you know, the, having an inclusive community, rather than an exclusive community is really important to me. In [...], we used to host teachers, all different teachers, kagyus, nyingmas, mostly, many others, and people, those we had the biggest center in the city, the only place that could accommodate such scale. And I used to call it the Maha Sangha of [...], it was like, people from all the different sanghas were interested would come to hear all these teachers and we all love that, you know, it's very important to both, you know, our own paths and just to be able to interact with and know you know, we all in a sense know each other not as well as you might know, your own specific sangha but there was this connection, and that was broken when, you know, there was the sort of edict to stop inviting other teachers and things like that, which just tore us apart. You know, even this was way back, you know, in the what, I guess the, what they call the old style, whatever it is. And, you know, so in terms of what people want to see what we want to see is an inclusive Open armed community like that, that appreciates and shares the teachings as widely as possible.

20:15

Yeah, I just want to point out to everybody that it's fine to just have questions hanging. Because these questions are fruit for more contemplation and, and thinking through. So thanks for the answers. And there's thanks for the question, too, is an important question.

20:37

Got to take a liberty here as stepping out of moderator for a moment, in the spirit of another hanging question before I turn it to [...] just for the moment. I think it's a challenge to those of us who continue to

study with the Sakyong and appreciate those teachings. Want space for that within Shambala have the genuine question of what else is there in Shambala? So we've heard from [...] and [...] another answer to that what else could Shambala be? That's more than - or not simply - the teachings of the Sakyong. I think the question on the other hand is without the clarity of a central Teacher, what is there to hold and I've heard this from Sakyong students so I'm just trying to get this other question on the table before we go away with hanging questions. Another hanging question is, in order not to have insularity, how do we hold together? How do we hold together a very broad umbrella? That's what's the center pole of the umbrella? How do we relate to that? But not time for discussion that because now I'm going to turn it to [...] for our closing, closing our circle.

22:01

Okay, just to be a little symmetrical. We close the same way we began. What are you what are you feeling right now after having experienced this conversation with your fellow sangha members and listening to everybody, and I am just for in the interest of efficiency, got a call on people going through how their read on my screen, which may not be the same as yours. So I'll start with [...].

*[name prompts removed – just last impressions, one after the other]*

22:43

And feeling thoughtful.

22:54

I'm feeling encouraged by the communication.

23:03

I'm hopeful that we can have a sangha that's broad and open and available to our

23:18

I'm going to repeat what [...] just said. I'm hopeful that we can have a sangha that's, I'm going to paraphrase inclusive, open, welcoming to all, and safe.

23:38

am feeling a little tender and also grateful.

23:46

frustrated with the intransigence of somebody is that I think it brought up a key question at the end. About the umbrella.

24:09

I feel a little tension in my neck and I feel sad.

24:31

on the verge of sad joy.

24:44

I agree with [...] and [...] inclusive and open sangha.

24:54

I feel curious and optimistic

25:00 For better inclusivity and self regulation.

25:13

I'm thankful for that. Oh, well, um, I was looking for a ray of hope, someplace in the, in the Sangha or a lot of people died, you know, and I'm not sure who's left or if anybody is left, that's just going to actually say something. So I'm just waiting to see if anybody will.

25:52

I'm really grateful for hearing what people had to say, I feel displaced. I used to feel placed. And it's hard to reconcile with the karmic path of connection that I had early on, that has sustained my commitment. So I'm feeling displaced.

26:31

I felt tender also, and a bit hopeful because we just began to move toward the deeper water of this discussion. And this, this forum has held so far. So perhaps a slightly deeper discussion is possible. Sometime someday, I hope.

27:00

Oh, you're gonna have that opportunity. Thank you. Because in November, we have more of these meetings scheduled, and the November meetings are going to focus on what do you want Shambala to look like in the future? No. So the meeting that well, you're you'll get invitations. And you may not be with the same group of people as we were this time but the format of that meeting is different. So we look forward to seeing everybody. [...] and I will be together on November 5, we have like this wonderful team.

27:48

[...] did you want to finish what you're saying?

27:59

Yeah, because I didn't get a chance. I really am thankful to have listened to all of you. It's a - it feels really good. And that nothing that was said got a knee jerk reaction. So I think you're skillful and wonderful to hear from you.

28:26

And I wanted to say that my feeling was like, like when the fog starts to lift over a landscape, and then you can see it, it's, it's like the sun, I'm just beginning to see where are the tensions and they're not

everywhere. They're in certain spots, and that makes it as somebody once said, workable, feels workable.

28:59

Should we all bow and to till November, when we see you all again. Thank you, everybody. Thanks so much.

## Chat

12:59:35 We will be sitting as people enter the room. Welcome and thank you!

13:27:10 **“what is your heart wish, or deep longing, with respect to your relationship with the Sakyong and the Shambhala community?”**

14:01:39 Compassion is a never-ending path and often hard. Integrity is an important value. Humor is essential.

14:02:03 Do we have enough confidence in our own path so we don't have to criticize or attack others' path?

14:03:29 Being a community at times called a cult reminds us of the best of community as well as that we can be cultish.

14:03:36 Simple kindness and friendship is our richness

14:03:42 Can we all practice at our local center (and all land centers) in a healthy, supportive, “sangha-like” environment, where we all recognize each other as brothers and sisters?

14:04:50 Encouraged to hear others feelings, and appreciate that community persists in spite of the challenges

14:04:59 CTR --“compassion is fearless openness beyond territorial limitations”

14:05:03 Compassion as the key

14:05:04 It seems like we don't want to give up on anyone.

14:05:32 There's some house-of-mirrors quality in these conversations - facing projections, things feel familiar but distorted, getting turned around and not sure how to get out.

14:06:53 I agree with what was just put in the chat at 14:03:42. That's central to healthy Shambhala communities going forward.

14:25:09 All dharmas agree at one point. the silent beatings of the human heart

14:32:44 Thanks Everyone. I have to go.

14:34:01 An alternative to a center pole is a well connected network.