

Timeline of Core Teachings and Practices in Vajradhatu and Shambhala

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Before 1971

Overview: Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche (abbreviated VCTR, Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche), is a *tulku* (incarnate lama) and monastic abbot in eastern Tibet, within the Kagyu and Nyingma traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. He is forced to flee Tibet to India as a refugee. He travels to Great Britain. During this time, he explores Western cultural forms and how to teach vajrayana Buddhism to Western students.

1959 As a result of the Chinese invasion, VCTR flees Tibet to India.

1962 Birth of Ösel Mukpo, later **Sayong Mipham Rinpoche (SMR)**, in India, on November 15. He is the only child of VCTR and a Tibetan nun, Könchok Paldrön (Lady Könchok).

1963 VCTR receives a fellowship to study comparative religion, philosophy, and fine arts at Oxford, and moves to Great Britain.

1967 Trungpa and Akong Tulku are invited to lead the Johnstone House contemplative center in Scotland, and establish Samye Ling, the first Tibetan Buddhist center in the Western Hemisphere.

1968 VCTR receives the **Sadhana of Mahamudra**, a vajrayana sadhana (liturgy) combining Nyingma and Kagyu influences. VCTR will later offer it without prerequisites to the Vajradhatu community, which will practice it as a twice-monthly group practice.

1970 Following a break with Akong Tulku, VCTR gives up his monastic vows, marries Diana Pybus (Lady Diana Pybus), and moves to the United States at the invitation of a group of students.

1970 Founding of Tail of the Tiger (later known as Karmê Chöling) in Vermont, and the Karma Dzong community in Boulder, Colorado, by VCTR and students. VCTR begins to travel extensively across North America, giving talks and seminars.

1971-1975

Overview: VCTR teaches Kagyu/Nyingma Buddhism to a growing community of students. This community becomes known as Vajradhatu.

1971-75 VCTR presents the general hinayana-mahayana-vajrayana or three-yana approach of Tibetan vajrayana Buddhism, and specifically its **Nyingma** and **Kagyu** traditions. He emphasizes shamatha-vipashyana sitting meditation as the students' main practice, with interspersed walking meditation. The refuge vow (hinayana) and bodhisattva vow (mahayana) are offered to students, and include students receiving refuge names and bodhisattva names. Students also practice the Heart Sutra, tonglen, the four immeasurables, lineage chants, and protector chants, among other things.

1972 onward - **nyinthuns** are practiced at the city centers.

1973 Vajradhatu is established as a religious nonprofit. Around 100 students who have completed a series of Buddhist classes attend the first **Vajradhatu Seminary**, a three-month seminary program designed as a systematic training in the hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana. VCTR leads a Seminary annually through 1986 (omitting 1977).

1974 Nalanda Foundation is established as an educational (not religious) nonprofits, which is the overarching organization for establishing Naropa Institute, which opens with its first session in the summer.

1974 The first group of students receive vajrayana mind transmission (initiation into the vajrayana) and several months later begin **Kagyu ngöndro**, vajrayana preparatory practices consisting of 100,000 prostrations, 100,000 Vajrasattva mantra recitations, 100,000 mandala offerings, and 1,000,000 guru yoga practices. When these students complete their ngöndro, they are to receive **vajrayana abhisheka** (empowerment) to continue with **Vajrayogini** meditational deity practice (first conferred in Jan. 1977) and other practices of the **Kagyu mahamudra** tradition.

1974 H.H. the Sixteenth Gyalwang Karmapa tours our centers in N. America, marking a significant introduction to the greater scope of our Kagyu lineage and heritage. HHK confirms VCTR as a very accomplished vajra master (see his proclamation for the specifics). HHK visits again in 1977 & 1980, all extremely important and moving events.

1974 VCTR initiates **meditation instructor trainings**. These, and meditation instructor and teacher appointments, continue in the coming years under the supervision of the Office of Three Yana Studies (named Practice and Education after 1991). Teachers come together for trainings periodically and meet locally, and are charged with supporting the community's practice. Some are also asked to make up local governance, and (starting in 1977) are considered "ambassadors" of VCTR. The first ambassadors go to New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Europe.

1974 **dathün** practice - month long practice is established at RMDC and Karne Choling.

1974 The quickly growing assortment of contemplative art and cultural practices that VCTR encourages students to pursue—dharma art, kasung practice, kyūdō, ikebana, tea ceremony, and many others—are formally instituted as contemplative disciplines, organized under Nalanda Foundation, alongside the **Vajradhatu gate** of formal Buddhist practice.

1975 At the third Seminary, VCTR introduces the lojong (“mind training”) teachings, traditional Tibetan mahayana slogans which are practiced widely in the community.

1976-1978

Overview: The Vajradhatu community continues to practice in the Kagyu/Nyingma tradition, and senior students have increased access to traditional vajrayana practices. At the same time, VCTR begins receiving and implementing the teachings, practices, and teaching structures that will become the Shambhala dharma.

1976 The first **Vajra Assembly** is held, open to all tantrikas (Seminary graduates; vajrayana practitioners who are either practicing or have completed ngöndro). VCTR leads yearly Vajra Assemblies until 1983.

1976 VCTR empowers the **Vajra Regent** (abbreviated VROT, Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin), Thomas Rich, as his dharma heir, a definitive statement that Westerners should teach and be able to be holders of the lineage.

1976 VCTR receives the **stroke of Ashe** and the **Golden Sun of the Great East** (referred to as the “root text” by VCTR) at the 1976 Seminary. These are the first-received teachings that will develop into the **Shambhala teachings**.

1976 The **Vajrayogini sadhana** is translated into English at the 1976 seminary. This begins formal establishment of the Nalanda Translation Committee which becomes an important vehicle for codifying the practice transmissions. In coming years the Translation committee will translate the *Rain of Wisdom*, *The Life of Marpa*, *The Scorpion Seal* and *Werma* texts, and the *Chakrasamvara* and *Vajrakilaya* sadhanas, as well as preparing extensive practice manuals.

1977 During retreat, VCTR composes the Auto-commentary to the **Golden Sun of the Great East** and **Court Vision and Practice**, important Shambhala texts.

1977 VCTR gives the first empowerment of the Vajrayogini yidam practice (**Vajrayogini abhisheka**), forming the first group of **sadhakas** (vajrayana students who have completed ngöndro and received a vajrayana abhisheka) in the community. These students begin **Vajrayogini practice** and convene **Vajrayogini intensives**, and receive permission to do the **Vajrayogini feast offering**. The Vidyadhara subsequently gave this empowerment every year till the end of his life, to a total of about 2400 students. With every abhisheka he also gave extraordinary direct oral instruction on the principles of the practice. These explanations run to

360 pages, including over two dozen talks/discussions and three Advanced Training Sessions. In addition, the translation committee compiled the first of many practice manuals on practice details; the current Vajrayogini manual is nearly 500 pages. VCTR continues to confer this annually until 1987, after which VROT and SMR continue this tradition.

1976-77 VCTR transmits the stroke of Ashe to his closest students, then to the entire Vajradhatu staff. The **Shambhala Training** process is conceived.

1978 VCTR gives the first series of Shambhala Training directors' talks to twenty-five prospective teachers of Shambhala Training. Topics include **basic goodness, the Great Eastern Sun** as the Way of Discipline, cocoon, and others. Further directors' talks on the **four dignities** take place later in the year.

1978 **Shambhala Training** levels begin. The Boulder sangha begins to progress through **Shambhala Levels I-V**, and the graduate program on the four dignities. The Ashe **stroke practice** is more widely transmitted.

1978 Ösel Rangdrol Mukpo, VCTR's eldest son, takes refuge with VCTR.

1978 The first **Kalapa Assembly**, a month-long group retreat focused on deepening individual and cultural connection with Shambhala, is convened for senior students. VCTR gives extensive commentary on the Letter of the Black Ashe, **Golden Key** and **enriching presence, windhorse (lungta)** and **raising windhorse practice**, and the four dignities, and introduces **drala**. VCTR continues to lead Kalapa Assemblies through 1984.

1979-1987

Overview: VCTR leads the community in practicing and developing Vajradhatu (or Buddhist Studies) and Shambhala or (Shambhala Training) as the main gateways for the community. These have parallel administrations, "paths," trainings, teachers, and shrines, and effectively function independently, though taught to and by the same community of students.

1979 VCTR begins publicly presenting the **Shambhala teachings** as a secular wisdom tradition.

1979 On **Shambhala Day**, VCTR invests Ösel Mukpo as the next **Sakyong**, successor to the **Shambhala Lineage**. He is given the title **Sawang**.

1979 The VROT is empowered to give vajrayana and ngöndro transmissions.

1979 Second Kalapa Assembly held at Big Sky Montana.

1980 VCTR receives the shorter and full **Scorpion Seal of the Golden Sun** texts, two terma texts from which VCTR composes the **Werma Sadhana**. These will form the basis for the Scorpion Seal Retreats and Assemblies established later.

Around 1980 The graduate levels within Shambhala Training are developed, based on Kalapa Assembly material. These graduate levels will later be known as the **Sacred Path** curriculum, and will cover Great Eastern Sun, windhorse, drala, the four dignities, and **Golden Key**. The stroke of Ashe is initially transmitted in 'Level F' of the Sacred Path.

1981 VCTR introduces Werma Sadhana to the third Kalapa Assembly, and introduces **Shiwa Okar** and other topics.

1981 In discussion with students, VCTR initiates the **Ngedon School** to provide more advanced dharma study for tantrikas. It is initially envisioned as preliminary to a seminary on advanced vajrayana teaching.

1982 VCTR consents to the foundation of a monastery. In 1985, Gampo Abbey is established with Ani Pema Chödrön as director, establishing a monastic tradition within the Vajradhatu community. **Ven. Thrangu Rinpoche**, a highly esteemed Kagyu teacher and vajra brother of the Vidyadhara agrees to be the guiding abbot of the Abbey. The Vidyadhara says that Thrangu Rinpoche should do there 'whatever he thinks best.'

1982 and 1984 Kalapa Assemblies

1984 *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* is published. Drawn in part from Kalapa Assembly talks, it becomes the foundational publicly available text of Shambhala.

1985 **Tenga Rinpoche** comes to Boulder and spends two months giving extensive teaching on Chakrasamvara, a central meditation deity in the Kagyu tradition. He works with community craftsmen to create a large three-dimensional mandala representation. VCTR requested Tenga Rinpoche to come in 1981; finally he was able to honor the request. Tenga Rinpoche says "I have never given these teachings in the West before, but because Trungpa Rinpoche is a Lord of Dharma if I give these teachings now, it will benefit hundreds and thousands of students."

1985 The Vidyadhara attends a four-karmas fire offering with well over a hundred students, in preparation for the Chakrasamvara empowerment he will give in 1986.

1986 VCTR confers the **Chakrasamvara abhisheka**, the second major vajrayana empowerment he confers to Western students after Vajrayogini abhisheka. (This empowerment will subsequently be given by Thrangu Rinpoche in 1989, by Tenga Rinpoche in 1991, and by the Sakyong in the 1990's and around 2009.) Over one thousand practitioners have received this.

1986? Kalu Rinpoche confers the Kalachakra abhisheka to a large number of students gathered in Boulder from all over our world-wide sangha for this empowerment.

Summer 1986 The first **Warrior Assembly**, a Shambhala retreat intensive, is designed and becomes the means of presenting the *Golden Sun of the Great East* and the Ashe stroke. Warrior Assemblies continue to be regularly convened to the present day.

1986 VCTR's health is failing.

1987 Parinirvana (death) of VCTR, on April 4.

1987 At VCTR's cremation, **H.H.Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche** advises students on further practice beyond what VCTR had taught of the Kagyu tradition. Based on discussions with VCTR about practices he intended for us to do in the future, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche confers eight empowerments: Vajrasattva, Vajrakilaya, and the three-roots practices of the Könchok Chidu and Longchen Nyingthik terma traditions. Khyentse Rinpoche gives us three Nyingma ngöndro practices to accomplish, the retreat practice of Vajrakilaya, and teachings on ati are introduced to the community. A guru yoga specifically for VCTR, Dharma Sagara, is also written.

1987-1990

Overview: Following the death of VCTR, VROT assumes leadership of the community, including its Buddhist, Shambhala, and Nalanda training paths.

1987-1990 VROT assumes VCTR's teaching role, including teaching Seminary in 1988.

1988 VROT gives Vajrayogini empowerment in Boulder.

1989 Thrangu Rinpoche gives Chakrasamvara empowerment in Boulder.

1989 In the wake of the controversy surrounding VROT's activities, he moves to Ojai, California, with some of his students. Following VROT's death, these students continue as a community, Satdharma, separate from Vajradhatu and formally incorporated in 1992.

1989 Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche recommends the sangha practice Vajrakilaya as a way of clearing obstacles and disagreements. At Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's direction, **Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche** gives teaching on Vajrakilaya at RMDC and Halifax, later compiled into our *Vajrakilaya Sadhana Practice Manual*.

1990 The Dorje Loppön teaches the Vajradhatu Seminary, assisted by Lady Rich, Judy Lief and Jeremy Hayward. The Dorje Loppön gives the vajrayana transmission.

1990 VROT dies, on August 25.

1990 **Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche** confers Vajrayogini abhisheka at KCL to over 200 students. Meets with SMR and the old Vajradhatu board as leadership is being transferred.

1990 Following several visits to Gampo Abbey, Thrangu Rinpoche initiates the first **Three-Year Retreat** at Söpa Chöling. The Translation Committee prepares all the texts in English over a six-year period of the retreats. The three-year retreat curriculum includes, among other things, intensive practice of guru yoga, of the mahamudra investigations, further practice of Vajrayogini and Chakrasamvara, and the inner yoga practice of the six yogas of Naropa. Our retreat remains the only such retreat conducted entirely in English. Texts and practice manuals have been produced by the Translation Committee.

Subsequently Thrangu Rinpoche approves a 49-day version of the mahamudra vipashyana retreats outside the Söpa Chöling context.

1991 **Tenga Rinpoche** gives Chakrasamvara empowerment in Halifax and teachings on six yogas of Naropa.

1990-1994

Overview: Following the death of VROT and a period of transition, the Sawang assumes leadership of the community. Students continue to practice the existing core path.

1990 The **Sawang** assumes spiritual and temporal leadership of the Vajradhatu community.

1992 The Sawang leads his first three-month Seminary.

1992? The Sawang changes the name of the organization from Vajradhatu to **Shambhala**.

1993 Introduction of abhisheka and feast practice to accompany the Sadhana of Mahamudra.

1994 At Kalapa Assembly, the Sawang first conducts the **Shambhala Vow Ceremony**, concluding in participants receiving **Shambhala names**.

1995-1999

Overview: The community continues under the leadership of the Sakyong, who begins introducing new teachings and practices in the Shambhala tradition. The Buddhist and Shambhala paths remain separate during this period.

1995 The Sawang is formally empowered as **Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche (SMR)** by Penor Rinpoche in Halifax at the "Joining Heaven & Earth" ceremony.

1995: SMR teaches the first **Shambhala Training Seminary**, one month in length. SMR's practice **Windhorse of Authentic Presence** is a main practice at this seminary.

1996 SMR appoints the first nine **acharyas**, senior teachers who are authorized to teach most retreats and trainings.

1996 SMR teaches a **Warriorship in Everyday Life** course at Naropa University. This title and approach will reflect in the later “In Everyday Life” (IEL) courses within the Way of Shambhala training path.

1991 - 2005 At the Sakyong's invitation **Khenpo Tsultim Gyatso** teaches at SMC, Karme Choling, Dechen Choling, and Dorje Denma Ling annually from 1991 through 2005. Khenpo gave core teachings from the Ninth Karmapa on mahamudra (three years), from Jamgön Kongtrul the Great on ati (1995-96, from *Lamrim Yeshe Nyingpo*), the six yogas of Naropa (two years), from the Third Karmapa's Profound Inner Reality (three years), and the *Hevajra Tantra*, among other vajrayana topics. In addition to these tantric subjects, the Khenpo taught on “valid cognition” and mahayana philosophy. All these teachings have been transcribed and are compiled in volumes available from the Nalanda Translation Committee.

1998 Tenga Rinpoche gives further teaching on Six Yogas in Halifax.

2000-2004

Overview: SMR incorporates the Buddhist and Shambhala practice paths into a single lineage, Shambhala Buddhism. SMR continues offering Buddhist trainings and empowerments, while restructuring some core programs.

2000 On May 23, SMR writes a community letter, “Shambhala Buddhism,” addressing questions about the relationship of the Shambhala and Buddhist paths. The letter concludes with “We are the lineage of **Shambhala Buddhism**. That is what we are.” This marks the public announcement that the Buddhist and Shambhala practice streams are to be held within a single lineage.

2000 SMR's sixth Seminary is the last to be three months in length.

2001 The first **Sutrayana Seminary** is taught by Acharya Gaylon Ferguson, with SMR visiting for part of the program. The program is one month in length, and focuses on the hinayana and mahayana elements of the earlier three-yana Seminaries. Sutrayana Seminary is complemented by a one-month-long, vajrayana-only **Vajrayana Seminary**.

2001 SMR teaches the first public program on Shambhala Buddhism, which includes Buddhist refuge vows and Shambhala vows.

2003 SMR leads the final Kalapa Assembly (as of 2019).

2003 Sakyong gives Vajrayogini abhisheka at KCL.

2004-2011

Overview: New Shambhala vajrayana practices are developed and offered. These replace Kagyu/Nyingma practices as the core vajrayana training path offered within Shambhala Buddhism, with Werma Sadhana and the newly begun Scorpion Seal path as the culmination practices. The non-vajrayana component of the core Shambhala training path is developed into a new curriculum called the Way of Shambhala.

2004 SMR writes and introduces **Primordial Rigden** ngöndro, a Shambhala Buddhist set of vajrayana preliminary practices. Rigden ngöndro is counted by time rather than repetitions, and takes much less overall time to complete than Kagyu ngöndro. Students doing Kagyu ngöndro in preparation for Vajrayogini abhisheka are advised to set it aside for the time being to focus on Rigden ngöndro. Kagyu ngöndro is an option for new tantrikas this year and in 2005, but not thereafter.

2004 SMR completes the first **Scorpion Seal retreat**, as outlined in the Scorpion Seal terma texts discovered by VCTR.

2005 Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche gives Vajrakilaya empowerment in Halifax, in response to vajra sangha request.

2005 SMR offers **Rigden Abhisheka**, which becomes the new way to authorize students to practice Werma Sadhana. Werma Sadhana replaces Vajrayogini, Chakrasamvara, and the other Kagyu practices as the primary vajrayana practice within the core Shambhala Buddhist training path. The Sakyong allows students who have completed Kagyu ngöndro to complete an abbreviated Rigden ngöndro to receive Rigden abhisheka.

2006 SMR introduces **Dharmaraja Guru Yoga**, a Shambhala Buddhist guru yoga practice. At the 2006 Seminary, students must proceed with the Primordial Rigden ngöndro. Kagyu ngöndro is not an option anymore generally.

2006 SMR marries Khandro Tseyang, daughter of Namkha Drimed Rinpoche.

2008 Khandro Tseyang is officially empowered as **Sakyong Wangmo** by Penor Rinpoche in Halifax.

2009 Jointly designed by the Sakyong and Kalapa Acharya Adam Lobel, the **Way of Shambhala** is introduced as the core Shambhala training curriculum. It includes six **“In Everyday Life”** (IEL) classes that give a foundational Buddhist education, Shambhala Levels I-V, a graduate **Rigden Weekend** retreat, and then the Sacred Path Series of graduate Shambhala levels, followed by Sutrayana Seminary and the rest of the path. The Way of Shambhala incorporates the previous Shambhala Training path, as well as the **Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies (SSBS)**, which is phased out.

2008 Sakyong give Chakrasamvara empowerment at DDL.

2009 Sakyong gives Vajrayogini abhisheka at KCL (only 25 new students, the smallest ever), but then recommends students practice Werma instead. He also gives Vajrakilaya empowerment for the first time (open to all tantrikas, only three students prepared for VK retreat), but then recommends students practice Werma instead.

2009 SMR offers the first **Scorpion Seal Assembly (SSA)**. These assemblies are offered annually through 2018 to Shambhala Buddhist vajrayana students who have received Rigden Abhisheka, and form a sequence of (currently 10) sequential retreats. The core practice at SSAs is Werma Sadhana.

2010 SMR announces the teaching position of **shastri**. Shastris are less senior than acharyas, and are authorized to teach the Way of Shambhala curriculum.

2011 SMR offers the final four-week Vajrayana Seminary. Moving forward, the retreat is more directly Shambhala Buddhist in character, is known as **Sacred World Assembly**, and is three weeks in length. Sutrayana Seminary is similarly replaced by **Enlightened Society Assembly**, 10 days in length.

2011 SMR confers the **Shambhala Vow**, taken during Rigden Weekend, and the **Enlightened Society Vow**, taken at Enlightened Society Assembly.

2012-present

Overview: Further Shambhala teachings and practices are developed at every level of the Shambhala Buddhist path.

2012 SMR writes the *Enlightened Society Treatise*, written during retreat in 2010, which discusses enlightened society and its relationship to the three yanas of Buddhism.

2012 Introduction of **The Basic Goodness Series**, a series of three six-class courses that explore the basic goodness of humanity, society, and reality, respectively, through both traditional Buddhist and Shambhala Buddhist teachings and methods.

2012 SMR introduces **Shambhala Meditation**, a meditation practice that practitioners can intersperse with shamatha-vipashyana similarly to tonglen or raising windhorse. It is offered first to senior students and the core of meditation instructors, and then slowly introduced to the overall community. The practice remains restricted and is not taught openly at introductory events.

2012 SMR writes the **Shambhala Sadhana**, a sadhana practice that is conferred at (and is a main practice within) Enlightened Society Assembly. The Shambhala Sadhana replaces the

Sadhana of Mahamudra to an extent as the main widely accessible sadhana practice suitable for various community events, and as the monthly sadhana practice for the community.

2014 Following revisions and expansions, the Way of Shambhala follows a two-year curriculum, and includes the six IEL classes, Shambhala Levels I-V, and The Basic Goodness Series, leading to Rigden Weekend, and thereafter to the Sacred Path Series of six weekend retreats. The core path for Way of Shambhala graduates is Enlightened Society Assembly, Warrior Assembly, Sacred World Assembly, Shambhala ngondro, Rigden Abhisheka, and the Scorpion Seal Assemblies and Retreat.

2017 SMR offers the **Sadhana of Kindness** to the community.

[End]