

SHAMBHALA PROPHECY



Passed down and re-told by Joanna Macy

In workshops, I often tell this story, for it describes the work we aim to do, and the training we engage in. It is the coming of the Kingdom of the Shambhala, and it is about you, and me. It is a prophecy that arose in Tibetan Buddhism over twelve centuries ago. I learned of it from my Tibetan friends in India when in 1980, I heard many of them speaking of this ancient prophecy as coming true in our time. The signs it foretold, they said, are recognizable now, in our generation. Since this prophecy speaks of a time of great danger- apocalypse-I was, as you can imagine, very interested to find out about it.

There are varying interpretations of this prophecy. Some portray the coming of the Kingdom of Shambhala as an internal event; a metaphor for one's inner spiritual journey independent of the world around us. Others present it as an entirely external event that will unfold in our world independent of what we may choose to do or what our participation may be in the healing of our world. A third version of the prophecy is the one given to me by my friend and Dharma brother Choegyal Rinpoche of the Tashi Jong community in northern India.

There comes a time when all life on earth is in danger. At this time, two great powers have arisen; these are the laloes (the barbarians). One is in the western hemisphere and one in the center of the Eurasian land mass. Although these two powers have spent their wealth in preparations to annihilate each other, they have much in common: weapons of unfathomable death and devastation, and the technologies that lay waste our world. It is in this time, when the whole future of sentient life seems to hang on the frailest of threads, that the Kingdom of Shambhala begins to emerge.

Now you can't go there, for it is not a place, it's not a geopolitical entity. It exists in the hearts and minds of the Shambhala warriors- that is the term Choegyal used- warriors. Nor can you recognize a Shambhala warrior when you see her or him, for they wear no uniform, no insignia, carry no banners. They have no barricades on which to climb to threaten the enemy or behind which they can rest to hide or regroup. They haven't even any home turf; for always they must move on the terrain of the laloes or barbarians themselves.





Now the time comes when great courage, moral and physical, is required of the Shambhala Warriors, for they must go into the very heart of the barbarian power, into the pits and pockets and citadels where the weapons are kept, to dismantle them. To dismantle weapons, in every sense of the word, they must go into the corridors of power where decisions are made.

Now the Shambhala Warriors have the courage to do this because they know that these weapons are manomaya. They are "mind-made." Made by human mind they can be unmade by human mind. The Shambhala Warriors know that the dangers that threaten life on earth are not visited upon us by any extraterrestrial powers, or any satanic deities, or any pre-ordained evil fate, but they arise, rather, from our own choices, our own lifestyles, their own relationships.

So in this time the Shambhala Warriors go into training. When Choegyul said this, I asked, "How do they train?" They train, he said, in the use of two weapons. "What weapons?" I asked, and he held up his hand in the way the lamas hold the ritual objects of bell and dorje the lama dance.

The weapons are compassion and insight. Both are necessary, he said. You have to have compassion because it gives the juice, the power, the passion to move; when you open to the pain of the world you move. But that weapon by itself is not enough. It can burn you out, so you need the other. It is insight into the radical interdependence of all phenomena- their interconnectedness, their deep ecology. With that wisdom you know that it is not a battle between the good guys and the bad guys, but that the line between good and evil runs through the landscape of every human heart. With that insight into our profound interrelatedness you know that actions undertaken with pure intent have repercussions throughout the web of life, beyond what you can measure of discern.

By itself, that insight may appear too cool, too conceptual, to sustain you and keep you moving, so you need the heat of the compassion. Together, within each Shambhala warrior and among the Shambhala Warriors themselves, these two can sustain us as agents of social change. They are gifts for us to claim now in the healing of our world.

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