

Sujet : A Letter from the Women Acharyas

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Dear Noble Sangha,

The women acharyas of Shambhala are writing today to send our love and support to our community at a time of enormous groundlessness. We hear the pain of those who have had the bravery to come forward and share their experiences of harm. We also feel for all who are silent and marginalized. Our Shambhala world has been turned upside down, and we are all holding many questions.

On July 1, we received an email with the subject line "Please" and the following supplication:

To the mother lineage.

Please, break the silence.

Please, approach and speak up.

Please, step up to the plate.

Please, protect the girls and women.

Please, protect the children.

Please, be good mothers.

Please, don't look away.

Please, don't be ignorant.

Please, don't blame the women.

Please, establish enlightened society.

Please, be courageous.

Please, don't be afraid to be powerful.

Please, come together.

Please, be the female sages of our lineage.

Please, cry with us.

Please, feel our pain.

Please, talk to us.

Please, make the community safe for us.

Please, don't wait.

Please, be there for us.

Please, we need you now.

Over the past week, the women acharyas have gathered our voices and intentions together. As women, we have experienced the impact of systemic power imbalance in our community; some of us have also personally experienced gendered harm in our journeys. We are dedicated to a more just and inclusive society and to structural changes that are more representative and diverse.

Together, we have been reflecting on how our lineage has met great challenges in the past and has come through difficult times. Typically, in times of dissolution, there is a tendency to solidify, blame, polarize, or jump hastily to new reference points. But for new forms to be genuine and fresh, it is important for us to be steady within this open space of not-knowing. We encourage you to listen, nurture each other, and stay strong as a sangha and as friends. New and appropriate forms can then evolve—unhindered by hope and fear.

As women leaders, we wish to protect our community and its members from harm. Like the society at large, our community has karma connected with intoxication and disrespect for women. Even though this is extremely painful, we are relieved this history is becoming transparent so that the Shambhala community, all of us, can address it.

We trust that the Shambhala path is one of transformation, and we remain loyal to the lineage. We have been steeped in the teachings of inherent goodness, and we hold the perspective that we don't give up on anyone—the teacher, the teachings, each other, or ourselves. This is our path of warriorship. We feel that healing and transformation is possible for this community. As this is happening, we are completely and fearlessly dedicated to deep and lasting change.

We support the Sakyong's decision to step back from teaching for now. We appreciate how he has brilliantly introduced thousands of people to the path of dharma, bestowed the highest transmissions, and guided our community for decades. At the same time, we see a lot of pain, sadness, outrage, and fear in our community around gender and other types of harm. Our eyes have been opened

to many patterns. We recognize the need for brave and caring spaces to begin a healing process that will bring out our inherent dignity.

We invite you to consider this a time of unearthing old social patterns and joining together to let new ground and structures make us stronger as a community. These times are calling for deep self-reflection by the Sakyong and also ourselves. As he stated on a call with leaders, he is committed to doing “the hard work.” So must we—business as usual cannot continue.

Additionally, we are aware that some queer, trans, and especially, people of color, have been hurt by the sudden attention and resources (time, energy, money) dedicated to gender harms against white women. Marginalized communities have tried for years to call attention to patriarchy, racism, ethnocentrism, homophobia, and transphobia. Dominant group power dynamics harm everyone regardless of their social identity or culture.

We will be in touch again soon and look forward to co-creating spaces for open dialogue. The Kalapa Council's transition/resignation provides an opportunity to explore new forms of governance. We, as a community, will need to work together to ensure that what arises in its place is representative of all the diverse facets of our community.

We are committed to listening, learning, teaching, and acting. With profound respect and sadness, we want you to know we are here for you and that we are committed to a process of community transformation.

The Women Acharyas of Shambhala

This letter was composed by the women acharyas in Shambhala in response to the supplication of a woman in the Shambhala community. It has been read and is broadly supported by all Shambhala acharyas. May there be benefit!

Translation Note:

- We apologize that this letter is currently only available in English. Translations will be provided as soon as possible in as many languages as possible.
- Toutes nos excuses pour cette lettre uniquement en anglais pour l'instant. Une traduction en français sera disponible très bientôt.
- Pedimos disculpas porque esta carta se encuentre sólo en inglés en este momento. Habrá una traducción disponible en breve.
- Ci scusiamo che questa lettera è per il momento solo in Inglese. La traduzione di questa lettera è imminente.
- No momento esta carta está só em inglês. Em breve a tradução estará disponível.
- Entschuldige bitte, dass dieses Brief diesmal nur auf Englisch erscheint. Eine Übersetzung dieses Briefes folgt in Kürze.
- "Przepraszamy, ta wiadomość jest obecnie dostępna jedynie w języku angielskim. Polskie tłumaczenie listu zostanie przesłane wkrótce."
- Omlouváme se, že tento dopis je zatím pouze anglicky. Překlad tohoto dopisu bude následovat.
- Перепрошуємо, що цей лист наразі тільки англійською мовою — попросіть знайомого допомогти вам з перекладом.

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