



by Alan Hayes

# Peace & the WARRIOR spirit !!!

**“One day when the world is ruled by barbarians, the gates of the city will open and the fearless warriors of Shambhala will ride out to fight the powers that be, but you will not recognise the warriors of shambhala, they wear no insignia, no medals, no uniform, but when two warriors meet they will know each other !”**

**T**his is a prophecy from the Tibetan Shambhala Tradition and many people in increasing numbers believe that this relates to the world we live in today !!!

A friend and mentor of mine Tim Merry, whom I met when I was an EVS volunteer with an organisation called Engage! InterAct in the Netherlands in 2002, had read a book called Shambhala – the sacred path of the warrior and I was intrigued.

I had heard different conversations and snippets from various people talking about warriors and their role in the world during my time as a volunteer, and afterwards, but I never really looked into it. At the time I was already being called a hippy and a tree hugger by my friends back home in Ireland, and I was not ready to present them with a new concept called “Warriorship”. After all, their idea of intercultural learning was if they drank a beer from a different country or got a date with a foreigner! So why was I so captured by this term “Warrior”?

Tim gave me the book as a gift, and I keep it with me. By now it is covered with notes and highlighting on different sentences that attract me.

I don’t expect people to fully agree with what I say here; I don’t expect people to want to become “warriors” after reading it, in fact you probably already are one without knowing it. The main thing I hope is that the next time you face a difficult decision in your work, and you ask, “Why am I doing this?”. Stop. And say this sentence: “I am a peaceful warrior, with courage and integrity”.

Thinking about the word “Warrior” it’s understandable to see images and associations with ancient Japan or China, the war arts of the Samurai, or even of modern soldiers; but this is not my meaning. Earlier I mentioned the word “Shambhala”, and

to be honest I still am not sure what it means, but it appears to be many things: it is an ancient mythical kingdom, it is a tradition and a form of meditation. In the book I mentioned they take the meaning from the Tibetan word “pawo”, which means the “one who is brave”.

As a Youth & Community worker in Ireland, I have faced situations that have required me to take a strong position and make a very clear decision, just “knowing” that it is the right one to make, even when it directly challenges others. I am sure you have faced similar situations, and what you are doing is standing up for what you believe to be good, and right and for the better of others.

Often, when I speak to colleagues and friends about how things are in their lives and in this world we reach a point where all we talk about are negative points. Why is this? I don’t know for sure, but I believe that it is because we are facing such a struggle in trying to change things in this world, in trying to make this a place where we want live, a place that we would like our children to inherit. Our thinking is on many levels, not just about the work that we do but also the environment, the economy, politics and we feel despair at the prospect of having to try to change them all, we feel disempowerment. Well we don’t have to try and change them all right now, one of the core essences of youth work is that we meet people where they are now. Realising and acknowledging the struggles, difficulties and natural path of evolution in people, this also applies to ourselves, we must identify where it is that we are now and where we want to get. If I start with myself, speak my truths, take a stand for what I believe to be good; I will be making a difference. If I am just not afraid of whom I am, like when I said that I would not speak of warriorship to my friends because they already thought I was a hippy and a tree hugger, now very often that is where our conversations lead. Instead of allowing our chat to move from what we are doing in our lives to negative associations about it, I find myself more and more,

exploring what are the alternatives for how we live our lives, if I can identify what it is that makes the good times so good, I can try to recreate that as part of my daily routine.

I believe that many of us are those “Shambhala” warriors. We are those very people who are riding out of the gates of Shambhala. In fact, we may have been riding for many years now and still are not completely sure where we are going or what it is that we are here to achieve. For instance, have you ever felt that you “know” what to do in a situation, you “know” what to say and when you say it you get a feeling of relief, a feeling of freedom and even a shiver down your body. A feeling of “Oh isn’t this wonderful! To be able to stand up for what I passionately believe”. I believe this to be the beginning of the path of the “Warrior”. Thinking about it is beginning; actually acting on it is being.

The Shambhala tradition says that when the Warrior enters the room people get up and leave. They are afraid of what will happen. Not that they are afraid of violence, but they are afraid that they may be challenged and they are afraid of who they are. Then as people begin to see the comfort that the Warrior has in his/her own presence and awareness, then they begin to get curious. And one-by-one, they will re-enter the room and observe, then maybe speak to you, and then they may also begin their journey on the path to Warriorship.

Standing in that room alone is a terrifying prospect for most of us. Not having control over what is happening. Feeling crippled by indecision. This mentality is not a healthy place to be, we should challenge ourselves to become comfortable living in a place of not knowing.

Change is happening in this world and when change begins, it usually ends very quickly! You may believe that the seasons of the year are changing; this is the first year I remember seeing bumblebees outside my window in November, in Ireland; or, you may believe that the polar ice caps are melting. Ultimately, change is a natural process. It is accelerated very often by our interaction, but perhaps we should not think that we should change the world. If we make small changes in our own worlds, in our own lives we can affect changes in the rest of the world. Perhaps we could cultivate increased awareness of our presence and its impact as a powerful weapon in the armoury of the warrior. It is a very sharp sword that can be swung with grace and elegance.

So, beginning an apprenticeship to become a warrior, what’s the first step? I believe that first step is to accept who you are. To do the work that you do because you believe it is fundamentally good. We read this magazine because we want to find out what is happening elsewhere in the world, and in the world of our work. We have a hunger to know and an appetite to be involved. And so we have begun already... Stand in the place of not knowing; when we are truly open to change, it is then that we allow the possibility of brilliance to emerge.



The next steps should be taken from a higher level of consciousness, with an open heart that will allow you to feel the joys and the pains of what you do. If I have a genuinely open heart, I can appreciate even the most basic of things; from the colours in the garden to the smell of my food and I can also appreciate the beauty of my purpose here. I was told long ago that if you enjoy what you do for a living, you will never work a day in your life. So even in the hard times when I question my impact, effectiveness or purpose, I know that I can continue because I love what I do. I believe if we meet people where they are right now, and we offer our presence, our integrity and experience to intervene with an appropriate skill, they will

find and voice their passions and begin their path in warriorship for themselves.

This is my challenge to you now. Look at the way you live your life; the way you do your job and the impact you have on the common good of humanity. This is the critical view we need to take to become conscious of where we stand in this world, to become conscious of “What I do” and “Why I do it”. When you have seen where it is you

stand in this world, then just like we create small next steps for our young people to evolve, you too will enjoy the fruits of your labour.

The Hopi Indians are a Native American tribe who still meet in traditional council; several years ago they issued a statement, which included the words.

“Gather yourselves, the time of the lone wolf is over. We are the ones we have been waiting for”

This is a call to the peaceful warriors, gather yourselves and stand in the place where you are most afraid to go. For that is where we will create the greatest changes, in ourselves and in others.

## Notes and references :

- **Chogyam Trungpa** : Shambhala, The Sacred Path of the Warrior, Shambhala Dragon Editions ISBN 0-87773-264-7
- **Dan Millman**: The way of the peaceful warrior. ISBN 0915811898

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