

Contemplating the Six Ways of Ruling

The Buddha taught Dawa Sangpo, the first king of Shambhala, how to rule by joining heaven and earth. Earth is where we live, and heaven gives us the ability to live with meaning. Following the paths of the tiger, lion, garuda, and dragon, we learn to balance heaven – wisdom and equanimity – with earth, contentment and delight in helping others. Then we are all-victorious, able to accomplish whatever we want. The Shambhala teachings tell us that to join heaven and earth, we need to be benevolent, true, genuine, fearless, artful and rejoicing. These are the six ways of ruling.

When the prince first meets his subjects he might lose heart, seeing how much chaos and disorder – political, economic, psychological and sociological – there is in the world and seeing how much needs to be done during his reign. If the prince begins to take these problems too personally, he might lose his connection with heaven. On the other hand, if he pays no attention to them, he might lose his connection with earth.

The first three ways of ruling – being benevolent, true and genuine – are related to heaven. They are qualities of justness. Being just arises from wisdom, unwavering certainty in basic goodness. This is the first step in bringing heaven down to earth. We have discovered our own sanity by conquering confusion. People look up to us because our life has purpose. Our presence is benevolent, true and genuine, like a beam of light breaking through the clouds.

HEAVEN

Benevolent

Benevolence is rooted in patience. Our mind is spacious. We understand that people suffer. Our patience results in gentleness, absence of aggression.

Benevolence requires the steadiness of an elephant – a sense of trusting ourselves and remembering the suffering of others. When others are acting out of aggression and speed, they can't quite trust benevolence. The wisdom ruler often encounters blame and criticism.

If we feel cornered in the hallway by irritation, it seems overwhelming, and we're likely to react aggressively. Our mind becomes a little box. We begin to panic because we have no room for maneuver. At that point we don't need to be less gentle – we need to be **more** gentle. Gentleness is always the best whip. It is devoted to the welfare of others.

True

Benevolence is infused with being true. Being true means possessing weightiness, a quality that is unyielding and at the same time very genuine. This is conviction grounded in confidence, like the force behind a strong breeze.

Being true to the view of basic goodness, gives us natural diplomacy. Having worked diligently with our own mind, we're familiar with realms of anger, jealousy and ignorance, as well as those of generosity and joy. We no longer believe we can get what we want with negativity. We're using different strategies. By resting in a big mind, we can conquer small mind.

Genuine

Being benevolent and true is how to arrive at genuineness. *The prince should not believe that what he is doing is right merely because he is the prince. He should know that what he is doing would be right whether he were prince or not – that is the way for him to be genuine.*

Being genuine also means being logical. This is not even **our** genuineness particularly. It is just a star in the sky that everyone can see. If we're in doubt, we need to reconnect with being benevolent and true.

EARTH

Fearlessness

In order to be truly powerful, the prince must take a great leap and jump into the ocean of the Rigden father's fearlessness. We are fearless because we are beyond doubt about basic goodness. We are not afraid of the power of windhorse. This fearlessness has a gently quality: it is rooted in unwavering compassion.

Trying to rule our world single-handedly, we are not really ruling. We may believe independence is a sign of power, but not wanting to work with others is a sign we haven't conquered self-absorption. The reality is that we can't handle our anger, can't develop our patience, and we can't cultivate our wisdom without working with others.

Artful

Being artful means acting with great dignity. We continually examine the influences in our environment. If everyone in our circle flatters or agrees with us, our self-awareness will become cloudy like a faded mirror.

Consideration of others is the root of being artful. With artfulness, we open up a situation with wisdom rather than close it down with our own negativity. We want to draw people out, not suppress them. Instead of forcing our opinion on them, we try to create space. The questions we ask are often as important as the answers we offer. In that space, they can learn to use discernment and discipline to discover their own wisdom.

Rejoicing

When we communicate power artfully, everyone feels included. We have each person's interests in mind. We have fearlessly rejected self-absorption, so joy and celebration arise.

Celebration is an attitude. It is the ultimate appreciation of daily life. We're not just in it for ourselves; we're in it because we want to offer wisdom and compassion to others. They feel the power of our love and care.

As we overcome fear and aggression, there is less bickering, jealousy and competition. Thus, as a group, we have strong windhorse, which makes us all-victorious.

The contemplation

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche has suggested that leaders of Shambhala contemplate and apply the Six Ways of Ruling in their practice of Shambhala governance. The opening paragraphs of this contemplation introduce the Six Ways of Ruling. As part of your formal meditation practice, set aside time to contemplate the application of this wisdom. After reading each of the short texts on the six ways of ruling, reflect on how you have applied this particular wisdom to good effect in your governance practice, and ask yourself how you might have applied this guidance in other situations that would have benefited from this wisdom.

This contemplation on the Six Ways of Ruling, was compiled by Richard Reoch, the President of Shambhala, at the request of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche on 11 December 2006 for the gathering of the Shambhala leadership convened by the Sakyong in Boulder, Colorado. The text is drawn from *The Court Vision and Practice* by the Dorje Dradül of Mukpo, his seminal writing on citizenship, leadership and leadership training in the context of enlightened society, and *Ruling Your World* by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. Extracts from *The Court Vision and Practice* are in italics and are authorized for use by Shambhala leaders in this context by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. Extracts from *Ruling Your World* are reproduced by permission of the Sakyong.