

Midsummer Day Celebration

By Wendy Friedman

The Druk Sakyong encouraged us as a community to have a deep connection with the seasons and the natural world. Shambhalian world-wide celebrate the Nyida Days on each solstice and equinox, so there are four Nyida Day celebrations in all. The name Nyida – Nyi for *Nyima* (sun) joined with “da” for *Dawa* (moon) – truly reflects the sense of these holidays, as they are meant to commemorate the ongoing dance of sun, moon and earth as reflected in the changing seasons.

Midsummer’s Day Festival was initiated by the Druk Sakyong in the late 1970’s as one of the Nyida Days, and is held in acknowledgment of the Summer solstice – the longest day of the year. Community and friends celebrate the beginning of summer by gathering for picnics, games, sports and performances – usually in an outdoor setting. Local parks, fields or a community member’s yard can all serve as the setting. It’s great to have a few creative people from your centre play with decoration for the outdoor space, which can include banners, flags, dowels with streamers in the four dignities colours, balloons, fabrics, art installations, natural arrangements, etc...

Midsummer’s Day Festivals have often included some sort of parade as well. This could be a parade of the various groups within your sangha (ikebana group, Dorje Kasung, Bodhi School, Shambhala Arts, etc...) It is also great fun to have a children’s parade! You can have the children make flags or banners to carry in the parade as well. Usually, there could be a couple of people who would preside over your festivities. This might be your Centre Director(s), a visiting or local Acharya, or other leadership figures. As the parade group approaches the leaders, the group can offer a standing Shambhala bow – which would be returned by the person(s) presiding. Some groups like to put a personal touch on their parade presentation – by singing or possibly adding some group choreography!

This is a great occasion to invite other friends of your sangha – including leaders from other religions or communities, political representatives, neighbors of your centre, and also personal friends. It also seems traditional to eat, drink, sport, play, and leave the Midsummer’s Day Festival generally exhausted – but with a big smile on your face.

I hope that all of you enjoy your Midsummer’s Day celebration! I can be reached at the Shambhala Office of Culture and Decorum using the email address below, and would love to hear how you celebrate at your centre.