

## **Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche**

### **Harvest of Peace Address**

Dorje Denma Ling, Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia, Canada

September 22, 2007

I humbly bow before the assembly of the greater sangha. I'm delighted to be here at Dorje Denma Ling, where for the last couple of days we have been practicing and deepening our understanding. It seems like an appropriate place to [a baby wails]—yes, exactly—“proclaim the truth.” I am particularly delighted to be joined today by Khandro Tseyang, who has gotten more and more used to all of us. [Laughs] Her father is an emanation of Gesar's older brother, so I have to be very careful. Hopefully she will address us later.

As we convene today in mind and spirit, I would like to take this opportunity to recall and reflect upon the purpose of calling ourselves Shambhala. Coming together as an international community, what it is that we do? In this season of transition, heading into winter—at least here in the northern hemisphere—is a deepening process.

When I was teaching on leadership at the Aspen Institute recently, it struck me that the message of compassion and the message of peace are never out of fashion. Compassion and peace are not transitory. In this particular time, and especially as we have just seen in Burma, we have to decide, individually and collectively, that peace is the answer. More and more I've been thinking about and working with how to harvest peace, particularly inside the community. Trying to harvest peace outside the community should not be that much more difficult. But inside or outside, the solution to our difficulties comes down to the element of peace.

Essentially, peace is freedom from struggle. What does that mean? Peace is free of our preconceptions, our prejudice, our anger, our bitterness, our feeling slighted, our feeling that somebody else has the upper hand. At a certain point, we see that this kind of negativity is draining us and that it's not worthwhile. Our mind makes a shift; we decide that peace and compassion is the road we need to take. Shambhala itself is founded on this principle.

I feel that we all need to reflect and reach that moment in our life when we decide “That's it!” and take the path of peace. To become a warrior of peace is the essence of the Mukpo lineage in terms of Gesar of Ling. Becoming a warrior of peace means developing courage and standing by it. We all get pushed about in different ways; we tend to just shrivel up and let the world overcome us. Then we decide things are hopeless. We gather together like this to remind ourselves to practice, to deepen, to contemplate, and to console each other that aggression, ignorance, and negativity are not inevitable.

Practicing peace comes down to deciding to make that shift. Deeply considering how we are going to lead our life—what format it's going to take—is a very important contemplation. Right now, many of us are so busy that we have a hard time relating to our own events, let alone sangha events or world events. But as warriors, we somehow have to expand our minds and hearts. If nothing else, as a community we need to become a greater example of how to live in peace—and not with arrogance or pride. That's a tall order; we'll be scrutinized. It comes down to each of us as

individuals: how we decide to live, and which thoughts we allow to penetrate our mind.

One element of peace in terms of “freedom from struggle” is to no longer be overly critical of others. On the bodhisattva path, we do not let the faults of others sway us. We will see faults in others, of course, but they don’t have to become our focus. Nor should we be overwhelmed or belittled by our own faults. We have to take a more positive attitude, an attitude where we actually become our own beacon. I’m thinking of the Vidyadhara leaving Tibet and coming all this way. He didn’t just think about his own survival; he planted the banner. The reason he planted this banner was to inspire others, to say, “Here is the profound teaching that can be an antidote, a solution to what is going on in the world.” He saw that he must come here; his teachers told him that he must come here. Khandro Tseyang’s father has pointed this out. He told us that the Vidyadhara did not just make Shambhala up when he came to North America. When he was fifteen years old, he was thinking about this. He was given this mandate and it was actually called Shambhala. He came here and said, “This is something that has to happen in the future.”

As a bit of a believer in destiny, I feel that Rinpoche was somehow destined to come and plant this banner. Even in Tibet, when the ancient monasteries of Surmang were founded six hundred years ago, the initial great teacher Trungmase planted the banner in the Surmang valley and said, “May the victory banner of dharma be here!” From that time, the tradition grew. The Vidyadhara came here and planted that same banner, not necessarily just hoping for the best, but with great intensity, saying, “The world needs this.”

It is important for us to try to understand how the themes of compassion and leadership work. As I’ve already said to some of you, the world is getting more crowded, and there is less opportunity for us to run away as yogis. The world is literally getting more populated; even remote places in Tibet and India are getting more crowded. Some of us would like to fantasize about just leaving when things get really bad. But we have to look at the seed that’s been planted. We’re not going anywhere. We have to be here. The purpose of this wisdom is to help and to create. The Vidyadhara planted the seed of something really important. The seed came with courage and conviction, *lungta*—in other words *chudzpa*. I am trying to expand my vocabulary. We often become overwhelmed by the aggression and monotony of what is happening in the world. What can we do? We have the ability to raise our own *lungta*. In a microcosmic way we should do this—“I’m going to do this”—and as a group we should do it. One of the mantras that I like is, “Even if I am the last person, I will continue to do it.” Call it crazy, but this is actually the ultimate joy because we are completely committed to it. If others are behaving in a way that is disheartening to us, we must not be swayed by it. We must continue.

The idea of peace has gone through many evolutions, from fanciful to unrealistic, but now peace is a necessity. Within the Shambhala tradition and obviously within the great tradition of the three yanas, we have all the tools we need to create a society of peace.

A couple of people have asked, “What is the etymology of the word ‘Shambhala’?” As far as we know, it means peace. Shambhala is a land that existed in a peaceful way; people who lived there were not overwrought and overcome by their own emotions. They did not live in a totally selfish way. Being Shambhalians is a great challenge, because as we all know, we are living in a time that is almost encouraging

us to be more and more selfish. One of the first steps we need to take is to trust our own decency, basic goodness, and strength. We need to support each other in this way. I hope that within our community we can be examples of people who are not angry, bitter, and prejudiced. We have the ability. If you think about an individual who was not prejudiced, think about the Vidyadhara, coming from a very cloistered kingdom and handing over to all of us the most important thing, the teaching that has been held for hundreds of years—what a frightful thought, if you think about it—saying, “Please do something about this.”

As we all know, we have plenty of kinds of meditation and wisdom teachings. What are we going to do about it? How are we going to go forward? We are in a phase where not only do we need to become deeper meditatively, but we also need to have a strong sense of purpose and intention: “This is what we believe in and this is what we would like to do.” As His Holiness the Dalai Lama said at the Stupa, “That’s great. Then you’ve got to act. You’ve got to do something.” So we are now learning how to do something as a community. This is hopefully the beginning of our being able to do more, not just as a group who supports this or that politically, but as a group that actually has something to offer. I know that President Reoch has done many things to foster this kind of development. But at the same time, it is going to be up to us. We are a community, and it is a beautiful thing.

So again I want to again communicate this one thing: please practice. I myself am trying to follow my own advice here, trying to make practice a daily habit and a yearly habit in terms of retreat. I know for myself that it is extremely beneficial. One thing that I want us to do as Shambharians is to practice more when we have difficulties, and to practice more when we have life changes. Even if some of you have not been practicing, please enter the water with your tiptoes. Just do a little bit of sitting, a little bit of tonglen, a little bit of mahamudra. A little bit goes a long way; we begin to gain our strength.

The other thing that I’d encourage is to please foster love and affection for the sangha. The other day someone asked me a question about the three jewels. They said that the first two jewels were easy, but the last jewel, the sangha, was very difficult. But if you can love the sangha, buddhahood is just around the corner.

I also wanted to mention that one week from today I’ll be running the Chicago marathon for the Konchok Foundation to help build our shedra and school in Tibet. This is the last big push we have; most of the outer construction is done, but we need people’s support to finish the shedra. We’re doing well, but as they told me in Tibet, “Rinpoche, you have to run another marathon!” But I just want to let you folks know that I’m getting older. I don’t know how many marathons I have left in me. So anyway, better help out!

The other thing I wanted to mention today is that as Sakyong—which I regard as a position as opposed to my name—I’ve been asked to help not only in Tibet but also with other projects in and outside the sangha. In order to support all these things that I wish to do, I have created the Sakyong Foundation, which we will hopefully be initiating soon. I hope that this foundation can support a lot of different projects that people would like me to do. So much is happening in our community right now; there is more cohesiveness, and I know that we are going to be gathering together in our various centers and trying to understand how they can grow. Richard has said that almost half of the centers that he went to on his tour—over sixty, I think—wanted purchase a new building and move or simply wanted to move to a more

solid space. With the Sakyong Foundation I'm trying to point to our strength: with such a large organization, it will be good to pool our resources so that we can support the mandala and prioritize our projects. That way, we can systematically support the whole thing. We've reached a point where the emotional and spiritual infrastructures need to be set before we start building.

Part of that is what we have been talking about today. It comes down to having the seed of bodhi in our life, remembering that the nature of mind is clear light luminosity, and not forgetting our inherent basic goodness or buddhanature. We should try to wake up every morning with that kind of reflection and go forward and project it onto the rest of the world.

So that's what I have to say and at this point. I would now like to meekly and gently request my wife to say something.

**Khandro Tseyang Palmo:** Hello, and *tashi delek* to the members of Shambhala all over the world. This is my first talk on Harvest of Peace, so I'm really nervous, because it's not only the people here that I'm talking to, but also the thousands of people who are listening. So I am trying to be less nervous.

Peace is at the heart of the Buddhist teachings. This is what we can offer to the world. As Shambhala, it is important for us to develop peace among ourselves in the sangha, between our loved ones, in our family, and among our children. I encourage you to do Buddhist practices, as they help to develop peace and are also helpful for others. My father always told me to do Buddhist practices, particularly the tantric ones and especially Gesar practices. This gives strength, peace, and lungta to me so that I can more clearly see how I can be of benefit.

I am very happy to be here today with my husband—whom you all know, of course—at Dorje Denma Ling. It's my first time here at this very beautiful retreat place. I hope to support my husband in all his activities, particularly in propagating the dharma. I have heard that the Sakyong Wangmo is supposed to bring and harvest peace. So I hope I can bring peace, lots of love, happiness, and prosperity in the Kingdom of Shambhala. Being a practitioner of Gesar, I feel that he is always blessing us; I'm sure his presence is strongly felt here in this room.

That's all I have to say. I hope to meet more people from the sangha. Those whom I've met, I'm very happy that I've met them and I've also gotten to know many of them. Those whom I've not met, I hope to know them some day when I travel around. I love you all and I hope you do the same. Thank you.

**[President Reoch speaks from Karne Chöling]**

**Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche leads guided meditation (and tonglen) practice:**

Let's just meditate for a moment. From this seat of Denma, who was a bodhisattva general, we can send our luminosity and our white light of compassion to all the individuals who are struggling right now in Burma. Just connect with your own compassion and realize that there is a great deal of pain and suffering going on. Then formulate that pain and the wish for the pain to dissolve as clear light. It starts from your heart center and it goes out [Exhales].

The attitude here is just to remain in the state of compassion and understanding. You can extend this compassion to the entire world. Obviously the conflict that is happening with our dharma brothers and sisters right now is a very poignant situation. [Pause. Practice].

Now you can repeat with me: *May all sentient beings be free from suffering and the root of suffering.* [Pause. Practice.]

Even though we are very far away, our intention connects us. We are fortunate here to live in a peaceful country; we do not have to worry about many kinds of difficulties. But clearly others are not in that same situation. So rather than being overwhelmed or numbed by world events, as practitioners we open up, we connect with our mind and heart. Emotionally it seems as the right thing to do; intellectually it's the right thing to do.

Imagine that the light is actually healing: suffering and conflict are taken away. You can do this with the timing of your breath. Repeat with me: *May all sentient beings be happy and have the root of happiness.*

If you feel that you can do it, now begin to take in the suffering of others, extending light out, bringing in their pain. We are developing immeasurable compassion and immeasurable loving kindness, immeasurable equanimity.

From this time of richness, we can now make an aspiration of one action or thought that we'd like to accomplish. This is a step towards developing peace, to meditate on our own activity. We are rich in terms of our innate ability. We have tremendous wealth; many individuals have much less. Therefore we need to act, even if it's as simple as giving kind words.