

# Harvest of Peace Address

September 22, 2002  
Year of Water Horse  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Welcome everybody, wherever you are, to another Harvest of Peace. Every year we try to understand further the purpose of this particular gathering, especially if you're me, because I have to say something meaningful. This time of year is a kind of crossroads. It seems it often falls at a time when there is some kind of conflict taking place in the world that reminds us how very much peace is needed.

For many of us who are in the middle of our life, peace here really means patience. I would like to talk about the notion of patience. When there's tension and aggression and we don't know what's going to happen, what often comes up is anger: we want to destroy or to solve a situation quickly. We want to know what's going to happen and get back to some sort of norm. The teachings tell us that the human world is defined in terms of suffering. It's also defined in terms of always talking: about war, about plague, about catastrophes. When we didn't have television, we couldn't see that there is famine over here, that there's flooding over there, and in this other place there's war.

People ask me if the end of the world is coming. If we watch all the television news in one day, it sometimes feels like that. And in some sense the situation that we live in is getting more and more complicated. There are more variances taking place. But what's really happening is that we're seeing the nature of the world that we live in. We have to realize what the Buddhist teachings tell us: this level of turmoil is continuous, it will be continuous, and it is always continuous. We need to realize that from the practitioners point of view it is all samsara, khorwa, an endless circle. This ongoing suffering and turmoil--whether it be natural or human-made--is part of our inspiration as practitioners.

Within the Buddhist and Shambhala teachings we are always talking about the nature of mind. We're always talking about the basis of enlightened society. Maybe we think of it as someday living in a perfect world where there's no conflict. That may be our inspiration, but we live in a world where it is always going to be in this kind of situation. However, that doesn't mean that it's meaningless and that we don't have the ability to overcome that kind of turmoil; we do.

Samsara and the conflicts of the world are very strong. They're always testing the mettle of our practice, view, and understanding. They're coming at us through all our sense perceptions: we're seeing things and hearing things, feeling things and thinking things. We need to realize that these are projections. That doesn't mean that they aren't painful or real in some sense.

As Buddhists, the bottom line is looking at the nature of the mind. Where does all this turmoil and conflict come about from? It comes about from kleshas--afflictive emotions, obscurations. It comes from anger. It comes from jealousy and pride. We think, "Oh, I'm going to have my day" and we utilize pride and anger and jealousy. Just by doing that we're creating constant conflict within our world. Our responsibility as practitioners is to look at these kleshas and see that although there may be a war happening somewhere else, fundamentally the seed of that aggression is within our own minds, in not being able to be patient. Sometimes patience means just holding our mind for a moment before saying something negative to another person.

We need to put into practice all everything we've heard within the teachings of Shambhala and the buddhadharma. This is the time to have patience; this is the time to have super-patience. Patience doesn't mean sitting around doing nothing. It means holding our minds and not completely diving into the kleshas. It means not acting on whatever pops into our mind, because we know that's when we lose our mind. From a Shambhala point of view, once we step into a klesha--aggression, for example--what happens? We lose our lungta; our windhorse is diminished.

Our anger may often feel stronger than our patience; the world often seems to be teaching us that we can accomplish most by pushing. But really, we need to look deeper than that. When we look at the nature of the mind we see that patience, luminosity, compassion, and clarity are much stronger than kleshas. To make our way in the world, we have to rely on those fundamental qualities. That is the expression of the Great Eastern Sun. That is the bodhichitta. That is the Great Perfection.

We need to have confidence that if we engage in jealousy, pride, passion, anger, and so forth that we are weakening our own windhorse. We're weakening our ability to practice. When we are feeling entrapped in that kind of kleshal situation we need to trust the bodhichitta, we need to trust the luminosity. We're inspired as practitioners of Shambhala because here we are in the muck of the dark age and we need to plant the flower of bodhichitta. We need to let the lotus blossom come up, and that lotus blossom is in the murk of our own mind. We need to let that flower grow and that takes patience. It takes patience to hold our mind just for that brief second before it becomes speech, before it becomes action.

Part of patience is really learning how to take care of who we are. It's taking care of what we are as a community. Every year we're growing as a community. We're also expanding in terms of what community means, as well as in terms of what being an individual in a community means. That also is patience, which is something I've learned more every year. The more I'm fulfilling my responsibilities, the more I learn patience, not just in the sense that I'm getting older, by the way, but in the sense of having patience among ourselves. As a community we have many good visions, we have many buildings still to build, we have many programs yet to do. But we need to have patience among ourselves. Having patience is going to create a sense of peace. It is going to create some room in our own minds and it is going to create room for the community to grow. We're talking about mind-oriented patience as well as patience among each other.

The patience is very individual. At a certain point, it's about how we can lead our life at a pace that is good for ourselves, not a pace that somebody else has provided for us. In terms of doing our own practice and work, what pace do we want? Do we want to be just run down by our work? Do we need to be fanatical about the practice? We need some kind of balance here. Fall is a good time for us as a community to look at our own sense of timing.

This is a time when all of us as a community can work on how we respond to our environment. I very much encourage everyone to contemplate shiwa, peace. How is it that we can have more patience, how is it that we can have peace? Obviously we're not international diplomats dealing with the world situation. But in dealing with ourselves, our families, and each other, we can provide some kind of peace and joy and extend that out. That comes from settling into the mind, deepening into practice. When we have aggression or jealousy or other kleshas our mind gets full and we can't take on anymore. Patience allows us to rest and settle so that we can in more. We can take on more wisdom, we can take on more compassion.

While I'm on the subject of practice: over the last few months I myself have been trying to do more practice and have been looking at my own time in terms of what I'm able to do. Starting in the fall of next year I'm going into a retreat, probably for at least fourteen months. At that point I will have been teaching and working for the community for fourteen years, I think it will be. Also, as many of you know I am about to turn forty, which is a huge mental drain on me right now. I remember very distinctly my father taking a year off about every six or seven

years to do retreat. Sometimes he wrote texts, sometimes he'd just practice, sometimes he'd just relax. I missed my last time, so I feel like it's time for me to do this.

Some people have said that they heard I'm stepping back or going away. I am not going away anywhere and I am not stepping back. I feel that in a sense I'm stepping forward because I need to do more in my role as the Sakyong, and part of that role is deepening my practice. I have been doing retreats, but a lot of those have been study retreats to deepen my understanding in terms of what I'm teaching. I will continue to do study retreats, but I also need to do more deepening practice. That is really important for me so that I have more to offer, to be frank. In sense I have been putting it on hold; I've been doing many other things. And even though part of me is saying that I still need to go around and meet a lot of people, I feel like right now the time has come for me to go on retreat.

I've been thinking about this for a while. When I told the people immediately around me some of them began to worry and wonder what is going to happen. Right now we're having quite a few meetings throughout our international mandala here in Halifax. We've made a lot of progress in terms of the administration here in Halifax and the board of directors. The Acharyas have met; I met with them yesterday. I also met with the Trust, and soon the Board is going to meet. The CMR is going to meet. I've been very pleased with how things are going.

People are stepping forward to help and we'll give them more responsibilities. In a sense this is what I've been doing for a while, which I think some people see and others do not see. For example, it used to be that I would make the decisions in terms of almost every position at Shambhala Mountain Center or Karmé Chöling or Denma Ling, Dechen Chöling all the various centers. Now, the director at each center makes those decisions; things have been passed on. I am not making every decision on every level in terms of every person's responsibility. I've handed the directorship of those places over to some really accomplished individuals in the sangha.

I will always have some administrative responsibilities. But looking at the larger perspective in terms of my responsibilities as Sakyong, I don't particularly want to be remembered as a great administrator--"Boy, that guy was really good at administration." That isn't what my responsibility is. I did it for a while because it needed to be done; that is what the situation presented. It's because the situation is much stronger now and that people are coming forward that I am able to do this. A few years ago I wouldn't have been able to go away on such a long retreat, but now I can. I feel very good about that myself, and that there won't be 6,000 emails when I come out and people saying this is all what you have to do. I'll come out saying we have done this and things will continue. I feel like we have a history of this that we can step in and step out. So I feel good about that situation. In terms of the level of my energy and in terms of the future this feels like the right time.

My book will be coming out in January and I'll be involved with that a little bit. Then I'll be receiving teachings from Khenpo Namdrol and then I'll teach all of the summer courses. I'll go into retreat sometime in the fall; I'll speak to everybody on Shambhala Day and we will proceed that way.

I think that this is a very positive step. I'm glad I have the opportunity to tell you myself, and that this is indeed what is going to happen. I want to thank you and thank everybody for tuning in today and for coming together as a community. The notion of patience, the notion of peace, could prevail. We could take any one of these teachings to heart. I send my love to everybody out there. Recently I had an accident and I was in the hospital, and I appreciate those people who sent notes and little gifts and so forth. Thank you for thinking of me in that way. I am on the mend. I will pray for your long life. Thank you. Please take care and I will talk to everybody soon.