

The Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche
Shambhala Day, Year of the Earth Ox, 2009

Good morning and a very cheerful Shambhala Day. I send you warm and heartfelt love and joy from myself and the Sakyong Wangmo, who will be addressing everyone later. We're thinking of all of you on this day; indeed it's a very important one for all of us.

Shambhala Day is a time when we gather internationally as Shambhalian. For many of us, it is the only time that we're able to get a sense of our entire community, connect to that family feeling, and raise our collective energy and lungta. I feel that it's very important moment for us to do that, as the world, the economic situation, and the general uncertainty is very palatable to everyone. It seems very good that we can gather as a community. Just being together and seeing each other gives us some kind of reassurance and solidarity that we are all Shambhalian and that we are all working together to bring a level of relief and hope for this world. As the Dorje Dradül has said in the past, we hold in our hands the ability to actually help the world. It seems like that is more obvious now than at almost any other time.

Today I am talking to you from India. We are finishing a three-month gathering here in Orissa, the seat of the Ripa lineage. In this retreat we are receiving the Rinchen Terdzö, the "Precious Treasury of Teachings," a very sacred and well-known collection of teachings; transmitting it was almost the last thing that the Dorje Dradül did before leaving Tibet. It so happened that sitting on the Dorje Dradül's right while he conferred this three-month ceremony in Tibet, in the seat of honor, was His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, the father of the Sakyong Wangmo. In my youth I always wanted to receive the Rinchen Terdzö and obviously was unable to receive it from the Dorje Dradül, who rarely did these very elaborate ceremonies, for numerous reasons—partly because it takes a huge support system of knowledge and ritual.

Now that I am receiving these teachings, I feel very fortunate. As he received them from my father, His Eminence says that he's passing them back to our family. He has been incredibly cheerful, and I'm amazed by his energy level. Many of us are tired at the end of the day, which is long—usually beginning at six in the morning and ending at around six or seven in the evening. Although there is the lunch break and the all-important bathroom breaks, it has been more or less continuous, with almost no breaks at all. But one relaxes. I think many of you know about what is happening because even though I requested it, as a whole it is being supported and sponsored as a Shambhala family, since we are the main recipients.

This is extremely wonderful because we hold these teachings, which cover the pantheon of all that is held within the Buddhist tradition, especially the vajrayana tradition. They include everything from the very basic practice of the arhat to the vidyadhara and the great tradition of Ati, including the inner practices of every possible meditation deity. The Rinchen Terdzö essentially gathers the terma or the hidden teachings that very gifted

individuals—essentially enlightened beings—received when they opened up their minds to the wisdom tradition.

What is interesting about terma—hidden teachings—is that they are revealed at the appropriate time. As a Shambhala community, we are very familiar with this because, for example, the *Sadhana of Mahamudra* is considered to be a terma of the Dorje Dradül. What we are most familiar with is the Shambhala terma, which is our namesake. Sitting here day after day receiving the empowerments of hundreds of different tertöns—I think over 800 at this point—I’m struck by how each one is unique, as well as by how each one is meant for a particular time and place. Certainly the Dorje Dradül felt that his Shambhala teachings were, as he said, his “life and blood,” his essence; they were his main contribution.

This means that the Shambhala terma is unique. This particular teaching is for now; it’s for this particular time. Especially during this current uncertainty, with its looming problems, insecurities, and financial trepidation, the Shambhala teachings, with their focus on fearlessness, are appropriate. We must ourselves be courageous.

Like many other people, I am delighted that President Obama was able to receive the votes and the general blessing of the people to try his hand at the office of president. Although I believe that we cannot just vote somebody in and expect him to do everything, I certainly wish his administration much luck; we’ll give him all the support that we can. There seems to be some kind of shift taking place, not just in America, but globally, in the sense that when we support our leaders, we understand that we need to take on some of the responsibility and self-discipline ourselves. So we also support each other; we can’t expect our leaders to do it all.

Obviously people can see virtue when it is there. In Obama’s case people saw something, and it is not complicated. As we say, virtue is like a daytime star that everyone can see. We may not want to acknowledge it all the time, but it is clear that in order to bring about any level of goodness there needs to be some virtue, whether it’s on a national level or an individual level. We know in our hearts that as human beings, this is what we should be cultivating.

In this particular time, we are going through a process of dealing with a level of fear. Although there are many intricacies, how we arrived in this particular situation is not complicated. It is basically the result of habitual patterns. The basis of the habitual patterns is ego. The point of the dharma is egolessness. After three months here I’ve drawn at least that conclusion. I’m not sure if anyone else has realized that. Sometimes we get so busy practicing that we forget that it is about egolessness.

What is interesting now is that it is not just a spiritual egolessness we need. We have come to a time when even on a secular or worldly level, there needs to be a level of egolessness. We are living in a world that is too crowded and small for a lot of big egos, the source of the habitual pattern. Individually,

globally, economically, and nationally, I think we have all begun to realize that this is a time when we need to look at our own habits and begin to alter them. That is practice.

In Shambhala, the notion of practice is doing it *now*. Practice means doing it now and not putting it off. As the Dorje Dradül has said, "There is not another now. Now is now." At some point we realize that truth: we have to engage in our life. Doing that is the quality of *lungta*, windhorse; we begin to unstick what has been stuck. When we examine our life right now, we're able to address the source of the habitual pattern, which is fear. When we are not sure what is going on, we react in fear and we start the process of labeling things. The process of labeling something because we are not sure what it is further increases the level of duality. Then it becomes a cycle: the heavier the dualism, the heavier the fear.

The notion of egolessness or practicing now is to free ourselves from that labeling, that fixating. In the kind of situation the world is in now, we can spin out and things will become very dualistic: we see things as good or bad; they are either going to fail or succeed. The world is going to get worse or better. At the heart of the dharma, we know that the world is fluid. Things are fluid and that is what happens when we practice now: we see that clearly. If we get stuck in some other time set, we do not realize that.

How do we overcome this level of fear? Through gentleness. Practicing gentleness is key for us at this particular time. Gentleness is not some kind of weakness, but a way to actually overcome the aggression that results from the process of labeling. When we label, we create an aggressive situation because we create a foe, an "other."

At this particular time it is especially important that we are gentle with ourselves. We're living in a time when it is difficult to find any peace. Even within our own mind, we begin to find many faults with ourselves; we become very harsh with ourselves. When we do that, it becomes very difficult to be gentle with others. So we have to overcome our fear even to be gentle with ourselves. When we are gentle with ourselves, we are naturally gentle with others. That is the basic ground of Shambhala society, which we call enlightened society. Shambhala is very much based upon that principle of exchanging self for other. The suffering of others is now very evident. If nothing else, what television can do is show us the suffering of others. Then we can begin to exchange and help.

In this time of stress and difficulty, there is a big tendency to isolate ourselves, refortify the ego. The key element of practicing with this tendency is gentleness, and the method is mindfulness. Many of us, even as practitioners, practice in a speedy environment. In a sense, speed is the disease of our times. It's always there and it's very hard to extract ourselves from it. But we must realize that speed is in fact just a hallucination, a self-imposed reality. Being mindful cuts speed. Being present cuts speed. If we trust in basic goodness when we look at what's going on in our life right now, kindness and patience naturally come about.

But these days, with the uncertain economy, we are often looking for a little freedom externally, outside, because we can't really control what's inside of our mind—our emotions, our anger, our jealousy. Since we can't control that, we cannot have internal freedom, so we are demanding an external freedom: we want our society to provide a free situation for us. But true relief comes from addressing the potential for internal freedom.

One way to create societies is to have a lot of rules and regulations—or a lack of rules and regulations, if we don't want any. But ultimately, neither approach addresses what is happening, which is that internally we are lacking heaven and earth. Right now we are seeing that the natural laws of the universe are catching up to us, and that somehow we have mistaken material freedom for freedom itself. Because we live in a free-market society, we have the ability to purchase whatever we want, and we think that is freedom.

But the basic interdependencies are showing us that really nothing is free. Somebody is always paying for it. This is the notion of interdependence, or *drala*, as we say in the Shambhala teachings, that what we are doing now is not isolated and unassociated. This becomes very evident when we're looking at the interdependence of the whole situation. Even the marketplace itself is not ultimately free. It's being controlled, or moderated – or maybe at least it *should* be moderated. So there are these basic principles.

I believe that at this particular time we must rely on our teachings because the teachings, particularly the tradition of warriorship, tell us that a good society is not based upon a quick fix. The teachings are being very honest. Even in our meditation practice, we realize that it is *us* who have to do it. We feel a level of appreciation for the honesty of this spiritual tradition that says that *we* have to do it. That is what we are talking about now.

In Shambhala there is not a sense that things are going to happen easily or automatically. When something is good or virtuous, it is often very difficult. When things are contaminated or bad, they are often easy and seductive. So now it is necessary for us to look at that. Many of us feel that while we are practicing, we are doing good things, but we still have obstacles happening. What's going on? Well, this level of goodness is why we have to be warriors. All the warriors had difficulty, because they were doing something good. In reading biographies of great tertöns, I am amazed by the difficulties that they all went through.

So really it is because we are doing something that is good, wholesome, and wonderful, that we have difficulties. The Buddha faced these challenges before he attained enlightenment. It's important for us not to give up. We cannot be foolishly seduced into fantasy, thinking that somehow something miraculous is going to happen. Within our teachings, we have an incredible variety of beautiful names for the different practices that we have—luminous, wish-fulfilling, and so forth. But when it comes right down to it, our path is the path of manual labor of the mind. That relates very simply with the whole world situation. Somehow we feel like that we might offload the work somewhere

else—preferably where we can't see it—and that's going against a very basic interdependence of the world.

But that doesn't mean that there is no magic. When we pay attention to the details of our life, we do find magic. This particular magic is all-pervasive. It is something that is part of us all the time. We can't hire out our practice and have somebody else do the work, or pick up our clothes off the floor. We can't hire somebody to say "How are you?" to somebody else. We have to do that, and take a level of delight and decency in doing it.

So I feel that at this particular time, we actually have the tools to address what is happening. We actually have the practice of economy. This is not just wishful thinking. It's relying on basic principles. Even though we might have a level of trepidation and insecurity, it's important to realize that our basic goodness has not changed. Good times or bad times, the basic-goodness meter does not go up or down. Its stock remains the same. Our own natural richness is here. The qualities of the Buddha are unwavering.

Within our Shambhala Buddhist path, the very first thing we learn is actually the most important one right now, and that is appreciation. We meditate and contemplate so that we develop an appreciation for what we have. We are still enormously capable and free, and if we begin to appreciate what we have, our mind doesn't dwell on what we do not have or on what we have lost. The way the mind works is that if we begin to dwell on all those things, we just worry more. Sometimes we feel that worrying might help, but worrying can only produce more worrying.

Paying attention is important. At a time like this, when we might have a tendency to be tight, it's important to be generous. We need to have generosity in our mind, which is limitless. We need to not become tight; that tightness of mind limits our ability. We need to realize that in fact generosity is the seed that allows us to receive help in the future. It's very hard to help somebody who is tight. Appreciation is important. We must realize that good fortune—whether spiritually or worldly—has to be earned. That's what the truth of this collective wisdom says.

Practice is not just an isolated situation on a meditation cushion. It is something that we can engrain and bring into our daily life. It's important that we are not overly obsessed with blaming others. Finding someone to blame only derails us from getting back to work, back to the path. It is a sidetrack. If we are mindful and gentle with others, we are not trying to fight with the world. This is how we engage in enlightened society.

This is a time when we have to join our internal heaven and earth principle. There is a level of basic goodness taking place here. Whether it's the economy or our spiritual practice, we need to work diligently with exertion.

I am particularly delighted because I feel that this year is very important for us in terms of further establishing and strengthening our Shambhala lineage.

We have a variety of programs coming up—for beginners, intermediate, and advanced students—in which I warmly invite everyone to participate. We are all on the path of developing and training. This is a lifelong journey. It's important not to become disheartened or jaded, but always to try to have that fresh mind.

And we need to gather. We need to gather and to deepen. We need to be in an environment where we are protected and can develop further. Training and deepening allow us to be stronger and to go out with more insight and windhorse. A critical element of how we go further in our own community is leadership: further training of our own leaders, and in particular, of our own teachers. I feel that we all need to embody these principles more ourselves. Of course we have to understand the path and the journey; we have to have the experience. So I invite all of you who are in a teaching capacity to attend the Teachers' Academy this year and the retreats we'll be doing. I believe that all of the center directors and leadership will want to engage further in leadership principle, so that we are not just getting by or winging it, but something deeper is taking place.

I encourage all of you this year to strengthen your warriorship principles: strength, virtue, loyalty, steadfastness, love—and we can't forget humor. On this day, I send you all my love. The Shambhala mandala is constantly on my mind and in my heart. I'm happy to say that we have a few Shambhalian who have ventured here and are participating, so they are experiencing this transmission that is taking place.

I'd like to encourage all of you to wake up. *Now* would be good, but every morning, when you are sitting on that edge of decision about falling back into the setting sun or leaping into the Great Eastern Sun, please realize that that is *your* decision. Windhorse is always available, and it is up to you choose it. I believe that all of us are here karmically. If we knew that it was going to be easy, we wouldn't have chosen this life in the first place. We are here out of our own choice, so we must follow through.

At this moment I'd like everyone to sit up and raise your confidence and joy and project out—on this day of the New Year—that *lungta*, that quality of innate goodness that is in you, that sense of joy. Raise your confidence to such a level that no matter how difficult things may get, you're delighted to do this for even one more kalpa; that's one eon. With that *lungta* and confidence, please enjoy your celebration and continue to take that forward. I believe that this year there is a potential for too much thinking and too much planning. So if you want to be happy, don't think too much and don't plan too much.

Thank you, and once again, cheerful Shambhala Day.