

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

Address to the Satdharma Community and Guests

Ojai, California

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It's wonderful to be here. For a long time I've wanted to be here with Patrick and Lady Rich and the family, as well as Shibata Sensei. In my heart I have always wanted this opportunity and this flowering process to take place. I'm just so delighted and moved that we were able to come to this situation now. As Mr. Sweeney has said, I have the best job or the worst job in the world, depending on how you look at it. As I told Lady Rich, I have to be a perpetual optimist, so I think it's a good job. That's what I tell myself every morning.

Obviously, the world of the Vidyadhara is vast. As Patrick was saying, just like many others of us he is appreciating more and more how amazing the Vidyadhara was in terms of what he accomplished here. I've been talking to Dzigar and Dzongsar Khyentse and other teachers who have gotten their feet wet over here in the West. It looked easy from a distance and they thought, "I could do that." After being here a while, they are thinking that it's not so easy and "I don't know if I want to do that." We're a handful. We come with an interesting package, and it's a lot to take on. The Vidyadhara took it on in a wholehearted way. With that enthusiasm he took on the Regent, and he took on transmitting the dharma. We are very fortunate to have him as the vanguard of propagating buddhadharma. He was vast in mind and intention. He was not an ordinary tulku; he was an extraordinary tulku. Even other tulkus say he was extraordinary, because of the vision he had. He looked into the mirror and saw the Kingdom of Shambhala.

The Vidyadhara was also a human being. As Lady Diana has pointed out, he wanted to buy a round-trip ticket from England and she said "one way." So maybe he wasn't so sure, but he was pretty sure. It was his wish to come. I've talked with some older lamas recently who said that even before escaping Tibet, Rinpoche was in retreat and said, "Now the foreign dralas are calling me," the foreign dralas being non-Tibetan dralas. The monks were surprised, they said "We didn't even know that the foreigners had dralas, let alone that they were calling." He felt the calling of the whole situation, and that's why he came.

We are in a unique position. A lot has transpired. There's been a lot of emotion and tension and so forth because it's a very potent situation; it's not an ordinary situation. If it were an ordinary situation, we wouldn't be having to talk. No one would care; it wouldn't be such a big deal. But it's a very potent situation because what we have is a unique teaching and transmission that the world needs at this particular time. Not to say we are the sole possessors of this transmission, but what we are doing in transforming mind and body is taking us toward actually adding sanity and goodness to the world. When you think of it, it's amazing. When you go around the world, just to say the word *goodness*, just to say the

word *compassion*, just to say the word *wisdom*, is a very brave move. We all entered a system where we could have easily been seduced into just living our day in a fairly narrow-minded way and not progressing, not developing. The Dorje Dradül, the Druk Sakyong, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, my papa, said that he brought the warrior tradition here because it is going to make a difference in the future.

One of the things that inspired me to work with Patrick and for us to work together is that the future has not really been determined. This is a very fresh approach. Of course there's history, including the relationship between the Regent and my father and all kinds of stuff, and that's great. But we're different people, you know? I work with a lot of different situations these days; people are always trying to say "This is the past," and I tell them that I understand. But tomorrow I'm the person who's going to have to get up and deal with that situation, and so is Patrick. And we're saying, "Now what are we going to do in order to make things better?" We appreciate and respect the past, but we're also looking at what we're going to be able to do in the future. How are we going to transmit this? How are we going to be able to practice it and be genuine practitioners and not feel nervous because we're not sure if we understand the dharma? How can we generate it or teach it to others, and have confidence in that?

I feel that this situation that has come together is a natural process of the greater Shambhala world. It is always interesting for me to be in this mandala. People know me in different ways and they know different aspects; I'm different things for different people, but I'm always the same thing to myself. That's because I know what is in my heart, I know what it is I have to do, and I will do it until the end – even beyond the end. What I have to do is to preserve the situation, not in antiquity but in terms of what it means to the future. I feel extremely delighted and confident that Patrick and I were able to work together and talk about the issues. I think that he himself had to experience and think through the issues. It's one thing to think about it and another thing to say it and another thing to write it down. Both of us needed to be very clear about it and what it really means, and also what it meant to the Regent and to Patrick dealing with his regency and also his spiritual tradition, which is something that I feel was passed on in a very fresh and clean way to Patrick.

But within the context of my role as a Sakyong – earth-protector – and trying to be the protector of this entire mandala, I have to guard it. That's what I was literally born to do, so that is what I have to do. I feel confident and good about the way we were able to work together and at the same time allow some sort of autonomy and freedom, because I don't want to suffocate the situation at all. Within the process of Shambhala we are practicing the terma tradition that the Druk Sakyong had – practicing. That's why we decided to do the Rigden abhisheka, why we have this ngöndro. Many times Rinpoche told me, "I left the entire abhisheka, except I want you to write a small part. I want you to write the

preliminaries. You have to do something.” In the back of my mind I felt like there was something I had to finish, and here we are; we’re fulfilling that and finishing it, something that we both share and that I feel is good dharma for everyone.

The Regent also was integrally involved in terms of the Shambhala teachings. There’s a tendency to say, “Oh, he’s a Buddhist teacher, Kagyü/Nyingma,” but at the same time, we have to redefine and re-understand what Shambhala is. It’s not just putting on suits and having white shrines, you know. We’re all having to evolve and mature. Regarding lineage issues and things like that, we are bit infant-like in terms of how this whole thing works. We have to understand that the dharma has progressed and expanded. There are politics, but at the same time the purpose of the whole lineage is to be able to preserve the genuineness of the meaning. We need to evolve in terms of what our relationship is and how this thing is going to go forward.

Now I’m responsible for the Surmang monasteries. There’s a Trungpa Rinpoche tulku, and I’m responsible for his education and upbringing. Rinpoche wanted to have a family lineage and to be able to preserve it. He knew that it would be a developing world, especially in terms of tulku problems – who’s who and who’s what and all these kinds of things. We need to be able to say, “This is what we have; how do we preserve the essence of it and go forward?” As you know, my relationship with my father and also the Regent was always close. One of my aspirations in being here comes from knowing that with all the ups and downs, the Regent was genuinely trying to propagate that transmission and the sacredness that I saw all the time between him and my father, that unique relationship they had, and the personal trust that Rinpoche put into him. The human qualities of the Regent, he guarded very precious. As Patrick said, that was something that at the end of his life the Regent passed on to him, and he felt very confident in this.

All of these years, Patrick has held what he was given and has undergone a process of trying to understand what it is, becoming more educated about its meaning and symbolism. I too have been dealing with this situation and now have fifteen years more experience trying to bridge these worlds. We had dinner last night and I said, “We’re trying to do something good here, you know? Let’s get that straight. I know that the lawyers are getting into word games, but I say this should not fall apart just because there’s one word that we don’t like. We’re sitting here smiling at each other, so something’s happening, right? If we were frowning, that wouldn’t be too good, you know? For myself in dealing with the Shambhala mandala and dealing with the greater Buddhist world, this process should have an end result that we all feel good about, and it does not all need to happen today.” And Patrick agreed.

At the same time, I totally respect Patrick and his situation and support him in whatever way I can. You all know that you have my trust and support. In terms

of how to deal with issues, it is a developing process. But I also think that with Patrick's ability to teach and the sangha's ability to practice, there will just be a natural unfolding. After a while, certain things will no longer be relevant. The mind has a tendency to hold on to things and then one day to forget about them.

I think that it's a funny kind of period. Richard has been very good in terms of keeping everybody's opinions straight. As I keep saying, it's fine to have an opinion, but at least be disciplined about how you express it. Don't create more problems when you express it. Also have an answer, you know? Anybody can come and say there's a problem. I've got people coming all day long. I ask them, "Well, what's your solution?" and they say, "I don't know." That's why I'm talking about maturity. We need to be able to come together. For Patrick and me it's been a great contemplative exercise to be able to look at each other, and say, "What does this mean?" I had to be very honest about it, saying, "This is my role, and I want to support you in your role."

As Patrick very eloquently said, we've been very honest – dignified was a good word – about what it is that he received. We haven't been confused by saying it's less or more. We're working together in this particular way. I feel like all of us are always dealing with that kind of balance in terms of how the sangha is going to work together – the way the practices are going to work, and the relationship, all these things. We have time and the freedom to be able to work together, integrate certain things, and not integrate other things. It's a very awkward for me, because I have to put myself in the middle. If I do not put myself in the middle, everybody fights, and then all of a sudden we have divisiveness and the whole thing falls apart. Then there's nothing to join together.

From that point of view, Richard's been very helpful, and also the acharyas have been very helpful, and Patrick has been incredibly delightfully supportive; he understands. So I do have support and therefore I can be more magnanimous, more generous, more inclusive. I feel like our community now is finally beginning to understand the principles by which a sangha can function. I think we're very hard on ourselves when we look at how we can get along as a sangha. It's very hard to be a sangha, especially in these modern times. All the Buddhist sanghas are struggling in various ways. Some are doing great, but everybody's trying to deal with how to be together and how to work together. I think we have had an incredible opportunity as a sangha; in a sense we're the longest-running sangha, really, give or take a few years of the Zen Center, perhaps. We've been around for a long time. We have a lot to offer in terms of how we work together – what works, what doesn't work, how we incorporate the multi-generational thing. I really feel like this is a great opportunity for all of us to learn how to be communities and to figure out what that means, because we really are communities now. We talk about "lineage holders" and "spiritual heirs," but when you really get down to it, being a community is dealing with people. It's giving confidence. It's offering a bit of inspiration for people's lives.

That's really what we're talking about here: how to get our lungta back, how to build a situation where everybody feels like our life is worth living. One of the things that struck me about the Regent is that he was a person who enjoyed life; he knew how to live life. That seems really simple, but it's not so simple; in fact, it is an important element of raising windhorse. Probably one reason that a lot of people were drawn to Rinpoche is that they looked at him and said, "That guy looks like he's good at having fun." Frankly, we're usually pretty bad at having fun. When we try to have fun, we just get depressed, you know? But those guys know how to have fun. There's a notion of celebration even with Penor Rinpoche. He's very much a monk, but every time I see him smiling, I know he's having a good time, too. It's a quality of our lineage—knowing how to celebrate and how to let people know that they are welcome to join us, that they can participate, make life worth living, have a good time, and at the same time, develop wisdom.

So the process is unfolding. In a sense, this is a culmination and at the same time, it's a beginning. Mr. Sweeney and I are excited that there are so many ways we can work together. At the same time we realize that there are ongoing responsibilities. Last time we were in Pullahari, they tried to get me to see that movie "Sideways," and Patrick took me to a few wine tastings. I asked someone what the movie was about and he said, "It's about two men having a midlife crisis." And I said "Well, we don't need to see it; we just did it." Patrick encouraged me to go to the Hitching Post. I went before I'd seen the movie, and it was really funny, because it was just like any restaurant in Wyoming. But after seeing the movie you get an emotional attachment to it.

It was great that the Khenpo was in Pullahari and supporting us. I talked to him a lot; he loves our community. The great old teachers are very few these days. Most of them are quite old, and obviously there's going to be a shift. Our generation needs to get it together and move on, because they're moving on. In terms of how it manifests, that wisdom is finite. So we need to be able to deepen our practice, to learn, and to be open-minded.

Again, I want to remind you that I am here and willing to try to work with people's ups and downs and so forth, but I really want to do this as a community. I don't want to be the person who always says, "I have the answer." I don't always have the answer, and also I feel like even if you do have the answer, that's not the most important thing; rather, it's deciding that you want to go through the process of doing something about the issue. I feel like that's what we've done here.

I want to express my best wishes, love, and tremendous appreciation for being hosted. Last time when I visited, people seemed really nervous. People seem less nervous this time, and that's always good. I'm always surrounded by nervous people. I sometimes look at someone and think, "What's wrong with him?" Then I realize, "Oh, he's not nervous."

Now I want to do this short chant, *Calling on All the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas*. In Tibet it's called *Tashi Jopa*. It was written by the previous Mipham Rinpoche and it's done all over Tibet when something's beginning, in order to bless it. I feel like I need to ceremonially participate here, so I would like to offer this for the sangha here in Ojai, but also for our future joy, development, and honest aspiration. [Chants in Tibetan] So thank you everybody. I look forward to seeing every one of you again and again.