

# Twenty Years of Ruling and Teaching

In 2010, the Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche crossed the age that his father had when he passed away. For somebody like him, this is considered as a time of obstacles and that is one reason why he decided to do a year of retreat. But 2010 was also the fifteenth anniversary of his being empowered as the second sakyong of the Shambhala lineage, and the twentieth anniversary of his becoming head of the Shambhala organization. A lot has happened in those twenty years. Here is a brief historical survey based mainly on quotes from available documents.

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On August 26, 1990, a young man of 28 years old was brought back from Nepal, where he was studying with his teacher H.H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, to Karmê Chöling, Vermont, where at the request of the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin, head of the Vajradhatu/Shambhala organization, H. E. Jamgon Kongtrül Rinpoche was bestowing the abhisheka of Vajrayogini. The Vajra Regent had just passed away and the leadership of the organization was handed to the Sawang, Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo, the oldest son and spiritual heir of the late Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, the founder of the organization, who himself had passed away three years earlier.

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, who at that time was referred to as the Sawang, inherited the leadership of a worldwide network of city and retreat centers that had developed through the powerful buddha activity of his father. The Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche had become a major figure of Buddhism in the west. To many, he had manifested in a way similar to the great Padmasambhava, the Indian guru who was instrumental in introducing Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century. In a liturgy composed many years later, the Sakyong would say of the Vidyadhara:

*Conquering the barbarians of the setting sun,  
You reveal the true nectar of dharma.  
With great courage you tamed new lands,  
Ransacking concept, terrorizing fear, nurturing all.*

After the Vidyadhara passed away, in 1987, he was succeeded by his Vajra Regent, Ösel Tendzin, the first westerner to become holder of the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. The Regent was a powerful teacher and an energetic leader. But soon he became sick and passed away within a highly emotional situation that divided the community. That was a painful time of turmoil and chaos. Some people left the sangha. Many others continued to practice and study, showing that the roots of what had been introduced by the Vidyadhara were deep and strong. So that was also the general picture of what the Sakyong inherited.

One of his first decisions was to appoint a new board of directors. Then, he soon went on the road for several months visiting over thirty centers and groups. In each place, he would give a community talk, sitting on a chair, wearing a suit. There would be more informal occasions for people to spend time with him. He would not talk much, but just listen to what were often expressions of grief, confusion, and pain. People did not know him very well. Many had somebody else in mind.

During this period, as he had started in 1987, he was also spending time in India, Bhutan, and Nepal, practicing and studying with his teachers. During that time, H.H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche fulfilled the promise he had made to the Vidyadhara to complete the *Sadhana of Mahamudra* and wrote the abhisheka and feast parts. He then bestowed this abhisheka to the Sakyong and had him do this practice in strict retreat for several months as a preparation for him bestowing this abhisheka later to his own students.

In 1992, the Sakyong taught his first three-month seminary with the help of Acharya Pema Chödrön and other senior teachers. He was continuing this important tradition initiated by his father in 1973. There had been 13 of these deep training in practice, study and enlightened society between 1973 and 1986. In the beginning of his first talk of the vajrayana part, he said:

*Today it is actually almost one year since I met His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche in Bhutan to talk about seminary, and to ask him what he thought and who should teach it. At that point in my life, I had planned to do a retreat, a long retreat, and to study with His Holiness. Usually he was very relaxed and didn't tell me to do anything, but he said, "You should do it." I said, "Well, I don't know. There are other things that I would like to do. It will take a long time: it's three months." And he said again, "You should do it." By the third time, he said, "Okay, if you don't want to, don't do it; but if you don't, then the whole situation will fall apart. If you don't do it, it could get very complicated." So at that point, what could I say? [Laughter.]*

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One of the last public programs that the Vidyadhara taught happened in February 1986 at Karmê Chöling. It was entitled *Realizing Enlightened Society*. He gave three very short pithy talks, with long silent pauses. The first started with the proclamation:

*We are definitely turning the wheel sunwards. And it is my greatest privilege to announce the inseparability of the Shambhala approach and the buddhadharma. How are we going to incorporate two seemingly different approaches into one entity? We have Buddhists and we have Shambhalians. How are we going to mix them together? I think it is very simple in my way of thinking, anyway.*

In the early 90s, it did not seem that simple. The community was split not only with respect to what had happened around the Vajra Regent, but there was a strong separation between Buddhism and Shambhala Training. They were evolving as two separate organizations, each with its own administration and programming. In some places, they actually had moved into different physical locations.

In September 1993, people received a text called *Shambhala Vision*, that the Sakyong had dictated during a seven-week retreat he had done that summer at Casa Werma in Mexico, preparing himself for the upcoming Sadhana of Mahamudra abhishekas. That was the first of a significant series of proclamations and letters that would address important issues and establish his rule. It was a vision statement about how to look at who we were and how to go forward. It included:

*At this point, it is important to understand the notion of Shambhala vision clearly. Shambhala vision is not just that of Shambhala Training; nor is it that of mahayana or vajrayana buddhism. It is a fundamental view that encompasses all of the various traditions. If we are practicing Shambhala*

*Training, while maintaining our own ground, we also need to realize that the Dorje Dradül, the Vidyadhara, was a buddhist. He was raised and educated that way. However, he propagated the teachings of Shambhala Training because that is what is needed at this particular time to raise the dignity of individuals.*

*On the other hand, even though the Vidyadhara was a practicing buddhist, he also taught the Shambhala teachings, knowing that he wanted to express himself outside of the traditional format of a buddhist teacher. Thus, if we are a practicing buddhist, we cannot ignore the simple fact that the Vidyadhara spent a tremendous amount of energy establishing and propagating the Shambhala dharma.*

*In both traditions, Shambhala Training and buddhadharma, we are not concerned with the word like, in the sense that "I would like to..." or "I would not like to..." We are talking about how to practice further both warriorship and compassion; and the most obvious place to begin is at home.*

From that text came the view and the command of how to name and organize our centers as unified entities that would allow the expression and evolution of our diversity. From then on, what had been "Dharmadhatu" became known as "Shambhala Centers" structured as three gates, namely Buddhist, Shambhala Training and Nalanda, run by a Shambhala Council headed by one director. In many places, that was not easy to implement. But eventually it happened.

In what was then the "member's section" of the Shambhala Sun, in November 1994, was published a letter from the Sakyong called *In the Realm of Possibilities*, written earlier that summer while he was teaching the three-month seminary for the second time. Here again it starts with a vision statement that leads to some decisions. He writes:

*Many of my thoughts over the last year have crystallized this summer into some clarity regarding our mandala. My primary work over the last few years has been to revitalize and ventilate our community - to encourage practice, and in particular, to encourage the vast array of skillful means that our tradition possesses in relating to the phenomenal world.*

*Our community is diverse, and many of you are practicing according to what you feel is appropriate to your life. There is a great deal of enthusiasm and we have various projects springing up everywhere within our mandala. This particular approach of encouraging everyone to participate in their own way has greatly helped our community to grow further and move forward. Recently, I have focused on energizing the Nalanda gate – dharma art and the Shambhala arts in general.*

*I have also taken this approach with leadership and administration in general. At this point we have a phenomenal number of committees, and people joining these committees have shown a great deal of enthusiasm. Now, my main concern is how to organize in order to emphasize our various priorities. Leadership needs to be more focused at this point. More clarity is needed as to which individuals are responsible for various activities. Some of our projects are slowed down because there has been no clear decision-making process.*

He goes on announcing the creation of an Executive Council within the actual Board of Directors, and the appointments of Mr. Alex Halpern as Executive Director and Mr. Peter Volz as Managing Director. Then he mentions three projects that need to be focused on. The first is the transformation of "Rocky Mountain Dharma Center" into "Rocky Mountain Shambhala Center", seen as a "microcosm of Shambhala society." The second is "to continue with the 'Building the Capital' campaign in Nova Scotia to provide a seat for our international activities." The third is "the development of the European land center."

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The Sakyong has told the story of H. H. Penor Rinpoche making the long journey from Namdröling, his main monastery in South India, to visit H. H. Khyentse Rinpoche in Nepal. It was "about him." They agreed that when Khyentse Rinpoche would pass away, Penor Rinpoche would become the Sakyong's teacher. Khyentse Rinpoche passed away in September of 1991, and H. H. Penor Rinpoche became then the supreme head of the Nyingma lineage. Now, in the fall of 1994, the Sakyong went to Namdröling as part of the preparations for his Sakyong empowerment that Penor Rinpoche was to perform in the spring of 1995. It was then announced that Penor Rinpoche had recognized him as the tulku of the great Mipham Rinpoche, the famous 19<sup>th</sup> century Tibetan buddhist master, who was considered an emanation of Majushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom. This echoed the refuge name "Mipham Lhaga", that the Vidyadhara had given to the young Sakyong, years before. Mipham the Great authored multiple texts used in all sects of Tibetan Buddhism, and prophesized that he would be reborn "in Shambhala."

In May 1995, the Sawang Ösel Rangdrol Mukpo was enthroned as Sakyong, "Earth Protector", becoming formally the holder of the Shambhala lineage initiated in the west by his father. In 1979, at age 17, he had been invested as Sawang, "Earth Lord", by the Vidyadhara, in a ceremony held in Boulder. He had become the future Sakyong, heir to the Shambhala lineage. Now he was to be known as Sakyong Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche, with the full responsibility to look at the establishment and further unfolding of that lineage. The Vidyadhara himself, the Druk Sakyong, had received this empowerment in Boulder from H. H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche in 1982. In that case, the ceremony had been restricted to the "lodge members", the senior students who had been introduced to the higher Shambhala teachings.

This time there was no secret. The ceremony happened in Halifax within a nine-day festival called *Joining Heaven and Earth* that gathered over 3000 students from all over the world. It was also attended by various political and official figures, and was reported in the local and national media. As was told at that time, by doing that the Sakyong "turned the whole thing inside out." It was a proclamation of the kingdom of Shambhala as an actual presence in the world, and in particular in Nova Scotia. The gathering ended with H. H. Penor Rinpoche performing the Kalachakra empowerment, which according to tradition is the teaching received by the first king of Shambhala, Dawa Sangpo, when he went to see Shakyamuni Buddha and asked if there was a spiritual path for someone who does not want to leave society. It is said that the Buddha taught him the Kalachakra tantra, which mentions the notion of enlightened society and the name Shambhala.

One month later, on June 26, the day of the anniversary of Mipham the Great, The Sakyong wrote his first sadhana, or liturgical text, called *The Windhorse of Authentic presence, Arousing the Confidence of Warrior-King Gesar*. Later that summer, he introduced this practice to the participants of the first, and only, one-month Shambhala Seminary, an advanced program for people who had gone through the Shambhala Training path.

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In the summer of 1996, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche taught his third three-month seminary. This time he gave all the talks. In 1992 and 1994, transcripts were published for the vajrayana talks only. This time, there were transcripts for all three parts, hinayana, mahayana and vajrayana. Although keeping the form established by the Vidyadhara of a talk followed by question and answer dialogues, the Sakyong gave longer talks drawing in the rich traditional topics that he had been studying, in particular what is referred to as the "grounds and paths." He introduced the four so-called schools or tenets of the buddhist view, and gave a detailed presentation of the mahayana teachings on relative and absolute bodhichitta. His approach was precise without being technical or scholarly oriented, and often humorous. He was transmitting meaning beyond words. In the third part, his presentation of how to enter into the vajrayana culture has become part of how students have been prepared for Vajrayana Seminary for many years now.

In 1996, he also empowered the first group of *acharyas*, senior teachers becoming lineage teachers with the power to give refuge, and later, bodhisattva vows. That was a big step in acknowledging those teachers and extending the whole teaching situation.

In the summer of 1997, he presided over the first and only "Vajrayana Seminary", a term that is used differently now. The Vidyadhara had at several times expressed his intention to hold such a program that was intended as further training for people who had already completed the three-month seminary. But it never happened. In this case, it was a three-week program with Khenpo Namdrol, one of the main teachers of the Sakyong at Namdröling Monastery, teaching the first week. Khenpo Tsultrim Gyatso Rinpoche, the famous yogin/scholar that had met the Vidyadhara in 1985 and was now teaching a lot in our sangha, taught the second week. The Sakyong taught the third. Transcripts of his talks were published under the title, *The Path of Luminosity and Emptiness*.

During those years, the Sakyong was teaching a lot about mahayana. It might have had something to do with the difficulties and tensions that were still happening within the sangha. At the end of October 1997, he taught a public seminar at Karmê Chöling that became the basis for a sourcebook called *Rousing Bodhichitta*. The first two paragraphs start with:

*Welcome. Some of you are involved in Shambhala Training, and others are practicing Buddhism – some for a longer period of time and others shorter. This weekend, my hope is to have a simple and basic discussion of how to do the bodhichitta practice of generating loving-kindness, to talk about its intricacies, and altogether to raise the level of curiosity about contemplative practice. (...)*

*There's a tendency to want to attain enlightenment, to want to do this or that practice, which is fine in terms of exertion. However, when we are asked, "What about everyone else?" we say, "Forget about everyone else. They can work it out. I'm practicing; I'm meditating on compassion. Don't disturb me. I'm developing equanimity, and you're upsetting me." [Laughter]*

One can see here the beginning of what would become a very strong emphasis on contemplative practice. At some point in late 1997 or early 1998, the Sakyong left for Asia, for what would become probably his longest period of practicing and studying there.

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He came back just in time to teach the 1999 three-month seminary. There he surprised everybody by giving very long talks, sometimes five to six hours, with or without a pause. In his opening address, he said:

*The reason for continuing to receive these teachings is to understand thoroughly the view of what we are doing. In a sense you could say we've all received everything already, but that's just a blanket statement. When you get down to practicing and you get down to understanding things, the lineage doesn't work or continue in a blanket way. It really comes down to detail and to understanding things specifically. (...)*

*The Buddhist tradition is not just dogma that we have to continue from generation to generation, but it is about getting down to exactly how we perceive the world. It is in this light that we're all here. I feel like I just came from a year and a half of seminary myself. It is endless, endless, endless – and I look forward to more! I also look forward to sharing what little I know with all of you.*

A key word here is VIEW. During these pivotal years of 1999-2000, people at some point would start nicknaming him "View Rinpoche." He was constantly emphasizing the importance of bringing to practice a deeper understanding of the teachings. That meant not being afraid to dig into these traditional teachings that the Vidyadhara had referred to all along, but did not have the opportunity to present in detail. The Sakyong started melting the hinayana and mahayana parts of seminary into a unified discussion of the "Sutra Tradition." He talked in detail on central topics of abhidharma, like karma and the twelve nidanas, and the five skandhas. At the beginning of the "mahayana" part of seminary, he gave two long talks on shamatha practice. That was a surprise within a surprise!

The Vidyadhara taught shamatha practice in many ways, and gave at different times related teachings on the foundations of mindfulness and the nine stages of shamatha. But what stabilized at some point and became the standard way of presenting basic sitting practice was referred to as "shamatha-vipashyana." The associated technique involves some emphasis on following the outbreath with a sense of relaxing the effort during the inbreath. The Sakyong's presentation followed the three-stage sequence taught in the mahamudra texts: first shamatha, then vipashyana, then union of shamatha and vipashyana. In the first one, the student is encouraged to practice a one-pointed shamatha of being completely present with the object, that is the body breathing in and out. This inbreath-outbreath issue did not go unnoticed. It created some waves within the sangha, as many students had, up to that point, been much more familiar with letting the mind ride the outbreath.

In the fall of 1999, Rinpoche taught a public seminar at Karmê Chöling that presented the fundamentals of hinayana/mahayana teachings in a way similar to what he had presented at seminary. Those talks were edited into the sourcebook *Taming the Mind and Walking the Bodhisattva Path* that became an important reference point in the curriculum. Right after this seminar, there was a teacher/meditation instructor gathering where people were introduced to the shamatha teachings given at seminary and encouraged to try for themselves this slightly different way of practicing. The main message was that the Sakyong felt that we needed to look closer at our way of practicing shamatha, that the introduction of this "precise" technique was appropriate at this

point in time, and that in any case we needed to study more deeply the teachings on mindfulness-awareness.

People who were at that program might remember a famous exchange, during a panel discussion, between the late Robin Kornman, an early student of the Vidyadhara and great colorful translator, and a young participant at the 99 seminary, who was beginning to be close to the Sakyong, named Adam Lobel, who is now one of the acharyas. Robin was very generous and articulate in his verbal expression of the issues he was seeing around this "new shamatha technique", and Adam kept his seat, asked clarification questions and offered answers to each objection. The whole thing was uplifted, humorous, and there was no sense of winning or losing.

In May 2000, the Sakyong was at Dechen Chöling, the European land centre. He taught a public program that was all on shamatha. The sourcebook published, *Being Human*, is, with the 1999 Seminary Transcripts, the most detailed presentation of the shamatha teachings of that period.

In June 2000, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche was in New Brunswick, Canada, for a Kalapa Assembly, the most advanced program related to the Shambhala teachings. The Vidyadhara, or Dorje Dradül, had himself taught several of these programs, starting in 1978, and as with the three-month seminary, the Sakyong had kept the tradition. At that time was read a famous paper dated 23 May 2000 and called *Shambhala Buddhism*. It started with, "Who are we?" and ended with, "We are the lineage of Shambhala Buddhism. That is what we are."

This text could be seen as just another discussion of the duality/inseparability of Shambhala and Buddhism. But this time, the tone is slightly different. That proclamation was in a sense the beginning of much more to come. He wrote:

*Some of us like to think that Shambhala encompasses all traditions, and that nothing is excluded. We are not theists, yet we have Jews and Christians in our Shambhala Training programs. Maybe we are everything after all – both theistic and nontheistic, both religious and secular. (...) Some of us may feel that we are a secular group interested in education and the arts, but how does Buddhism fit? (...) Is it more that culturally we accept everything, but spiritually and philosophically we adhere to the Buddhist and Shambhala views? (...) When people ask us about the specifics, we might present them with a jumble of run-on sentences that are met with a blank stare.*

*It seems that over time we have been through a maturation process. It began when the Vidyadhara took a group of students and introduced them to a bigger world, that of the Great Eastern Sun, so that they would not become overly infatuated with Buddhism and tantra and meditation. He tried to educate them, to help them mature. He tried to show them the beauty of the world, and in particular the wisdom of their own and other cultures. (...)*

*My father understood that there was no conflict between Buddhism and Shambhala. To him, they were a beautiful combination and each had its role to play. The Buddhist and Shambhala teachings both have the view that spiritual and secular activities are inseparable. They both join the ultimate and relative entities, heaven and earth. However, in terms of their application to our lives, they each have their own special strength, their own particular emphasis. (...)*

*We have a unique culture. Our Buddhist teachings, originating from the great teachers of India and Tibet and in particular from the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages, are influenced by Japanese culture in the way we practice the way of the bow, eat oryoki and arrange our shrine. The way that we educate ourselves in the dharma and our unique etiquette and manners draw inspiration from both*

*the West and the East. (...) Much of what we assume to be Buddhist in our community is heavily influenced by the teachings of Shambhala. (...)*

*What has been passed on to me are the teachings of the buddhadharma: the lineages of hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana; and mahamudra and dzokchen within tantra; and the lineage of Shambhala. And this is what will be passed on to future sakyongs. Future sakyongs will be Shambhalian Buddhists, just as this one is and the previous sakyong was. The role of the sakyong is to protect and propagate both the Shambhala and Buddhist teachings.*

Later in June 2000, he was back at Shambhala Mountain Centre for another three-month seminary. He basically continued the approach initiated in 1999, but with some reference to a "Shambhala Buddhist culture". Here are some quotes from the first talk.

*Generally, understanding the view, practice, and meditation is important. At the same time, there is an outside world, so to speak, and in that sense everything that we do is important. When we talk about Shambhala Buddhism, we are trying to look at where we are and incorporate everything we do. (...)*

*The relationship between the individual journey and the community journey is very important. What we are trying to do with the notion of Shambhala and Buddhism – you can call it Shambhala Buddhism – is to build a culture. It isn't American, German, or French - it's a culture of human beings living on this earth, being strong, dignified, compassionate, gentle, understanding, and having enough confidence to be able to look at others to see what's going on with them. We're beginning to lay the foundation of a society.*

But the rest of the teaching was about Buddhism. He reviewed some of the themes he had presented in detail the previous summer, and then entered into a deep presentation of the Four Noble Truths. At the end of the first part of seminary, he concluded this way.

*We went through the skandhas last year, and I feel that this year, we should understand the four truths. If we don't know the four truths, we can't really call ourselves Buddhists, especially if we want to practice the vajrayana. Otherwise we're just trying to become magicians. That's not the point and, in fact, that is the wrong view. The buddhadharma always comes down to these simple teachings, which are almost a kind of folklore. Now we begin to see that these teachings are profound and deep. When we begin to see the incredible detail, wisdom, and integrity of the teachings, they are overwhelmingly beautiful. Then we say, "This is amazing. What else have I seen that is this precise, where everything is laid out this way?"*

In the second part, he completed the discussion on the four truths and gave several talks on vipashyana, and the union of shamatha and vipashyana, including some instructions on what is sometimes referred to as "sutra mahamudra." That was also the end of the three-month seminar. That year, he had empowered a new group of acharyas and announced that the traditional seminary would be split into two one-month programs, a Sutrayana Seminary under the responsibility of the acharyas, and a Vajrayana Seminary that he would continue to teach. That was also the end of the Seminary Transcripts. He said that he did not want to publish new transcripts and sourcebooks every year forever. He wanted to publish books.

At the same time, with those 1999 and 2000 seminaries, he had laid the ground, in terms of the buddhist teachings, for what he would present in the next ten years, and would frequently refer to them or take for granted some familiarity with those transcripts. In the vajrayana part, in 1999, he continued the discussion on shamatha, showing how it develops within the context of the vajra-

yana transmission. Then he started teaching on a root vajrayana text, called *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, using a commentary by Jamgön Mipham the Great called *Ösel Nyingpo*, "Essence of Clear Light". He gave an extensive presentation of the dzokchen view of Purity and Equality. In 2000, he went further with this presentation in terms of ground, path and fruition tantra. He also continued the presentation of vipashyana showing how the union of shamatha and vipashyana becomes mahamudra practice. A general presentation of these teachings on the dzokchen view was published in the May 2004 issue of the Shambhala Sun under the title *Seeing the Essence of Phenomena as Wisdom*.

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At some point during those years, Rinpoche started talking about a general public book on shamatha. The concept was something like an "airport book," a book that somebody could be attracted to pick up while waiting for the next flight. A publisher from the Penguin Putnam organization was approached and they were definitively interested. But there was a slight problem. Rinpoche dictated a manuscript of over 1000 pages, and they would not even look at something over 200 to 300 pages. Several people tried to work on that manuscript and the whole thing got stuck. Eventually Emily Sell was approached. She had worked for Shambhala Publications for many years, editing in particular Pema Chödrön's books. She became the Sakyong's personal editor and the result was *Turning the Mind Into an Ally* which came out in 2003 and became a best-seller in its category.

It is an airport book, but at the same time it is the basic meditation manual that we use now with beginners. The first half is about shamatha, "peaceful abiding." For somebody familiar with the 1999 and 2000 transcripts, it is quite amazing to see how much of these teachings are presented here in a very simple and straightforward way. The second half is about vipashyana, "insight." The turning point is chapter 12, called *Turning the Mind*.

*The Buddha taught that to wake up from the dream of bewilderment and suffering, we first need to sit still and take a deep breath. Peaceful abiding is that deep breath, a way to strip away the chaos of bewilderment and find some basic sanity. But peaceful abiding is only the beginning of the spiritual journey. Simply withdrawing into the stability of our own minds could turn meditation practice into just another way to shop for pleasure. Instead, with this healthy sense of self we can look more deeply into the meaning of our being. We can take meditation further by using insight, vipashyana in Sanskrit, to reflect accurately on our own experience and on the nature of existence. We can point our mind in a new direction – away from illusions and toward reality. We do this through the practice of contemplation.*

Finally some of these long talks that he gave at 1999 and 2000 seminaries found their way to a very large public and form the basis of how we introduce people to meditation practice. They start with the basic peaceful abiding instruction of following the breath, but soon they are encouraged to include contemplations into their practice. In the Sakyong's approach, that is the way to bring view into meditation practice, and also into daily life.

In February 2001, he wrote a contemplative practice called *Arousing the Motivation for True Freedom from Samsara*. It was published as a little booklet with a red cover. It is about the commitment to the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha, referred to as the three jewels. There is a

ceremony called "Taking the Refuge Vow" which is the formal entrance into the buddhist path. By writing this practice, Rinpoche stressed that this is not just a once in a lifetime event, but could become a daily practice. The text is particular in many ways. It is not just a statement of the hinayana teachings. It is a full mahayana and Shambhala view of taking refuge. It includes a front visualization of a golden Shakyamuni Buddha, and a vivid description of each of the objects of refuge. It ends with:

*Taking refuge in the three jewels is the basis upon which I enter the path of the middle way and see the intrinsic emptiness of all phenomena. Taking refuge allows me to delve into buddha nature wholeheartedly and to see the luminosity of all appearances. Thus, taking refuge is the basis for all accomplishment. (...)*

*When I do so, I can joyously proclaim that I am a child of the Buddha, a student of the dharma, a friend of the sangha, and a warrior of Shambhala.*

From June 6 to July 17, 2001, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche went for his first trip to Tibet. The purpose of the journey was to visit the Surmang monasteries, home to the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, and the Golok region, where some descendants of the family of the previous Mipham still live. At Surmang, he met with the then twelve-year-old Chökyi Senge, the Twelfth Trungpa Tulku. It is said that their connection was immediate. During this trip, he performed the Sadhana of Mahamudra abhisheka several times, once to a crowd of over 3000 people. In Golok, he was honored by officials, lamas and family descendants as the reincarnation of Mipham the Great and was given relics and objects that belonged to his predecessor. Among these was the personal seal. In August, a few weeks after returning from his trip, the Sakyong used this seal for the first time on the text of a Manjushri practice that he wrote, *The Wheel of Wisdom*. Mipham the Great was considered as an emanation of Manjushri. As part of the commentary to that practice, the Sakyong wrote:

*The point of any meditation is to develop wisdom. It is wisdom that allows us to achieve enlightenment. At the heart of any practice, we are becoming more and more familiar with wisdom. Manjushri is that wisdom. Wisdom is how we rule our world. When we embody wisdom, we are jampal – the Tibetan word for Manjushri – gentle and glorious. Thus when we embody wisdom, we become glorious and gentle. Shambhala is a society where people are gentle and glorious, and thus wise. The Rigdens are an embodiment of Manjushri.*

Later that month, he presided over the consecration of the Great Stupa of Dharmakaya, at Shambhala Mountain Centre. That was one of the most significant events organized by the sangha since the Sakyong's empowerment. The magnificent structure that holds the relics of the Vidyadhara had been under construction for fourteen years. It was the largest and most complex project that the Shambhala sangha had ever undertaken. For many people, the consecration of the Stupa had also a sense of transition. It meant that the passing away of the Great Vidyadhara Chökyi Gyatso had been properly acknowledged and it was time to move the energy forward. The overall coordinator for the consecration ceremonies was the director of the London Shambhala Centre, Richard Reoch.

Among the artifacts sold at the occasion of the consecration of the Great Stupa in 2001 was a beautiful one hundred and eight page richly illustrated booklet that included two CDs with songs from famous artists including Sting, Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen, Willie Nelson as well as also famous sangha artists like Bill Douglas, David Nichtern, Jerry Granelli, Beausoleil, Allen Ginsberg. Track 14 of CD 1 is a poem called *A Lightning Bolt of Wisdom* read, within a beautiful musical environment, by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. That was the beginning of a collaboration with the German producer and sangha member Felix Magnus, that brought up several famous "songs" like *What About Me* and *Come and Dance*, some of them being turned into videos that found their way into YouTube, and eventually put into an album called *Mipham* that came out in 2005.

The poetic expression of the Sakyong was already known within the sangha. He had published *Smile of the Tiger*, in 1998, and *Snow Lion's Delight* came out in 2005. In her introduction, Anne Waldman wrote,

*"Pick up your pots and pans/ Grab that meditation belt and walk this path," Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche cheerfully extols us in Snow Lion's Delight, a garland of 108 realization poems that examine the naïve mind as it self-consciously experiences itself growing to greater insight and delight.*

Gradually in those years, an astonishing change happened. The sturdy earthy-looking Tibetan turned into a slim athletic-looking jogger. In his early forties, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche changed his diet and started running, which led to his training to become a quasi-professional marathon runner. And he did run many marathons throughout the world, using this occasion for raising money for the Konchok foundation, that he had set up to help the people of Surmang, in particular to build a shedra and to help with the education of the Twelfth Trungpa. It was named after the Sakyong's mother Lady Konchok Palden. That was another of these activities that started making him more visible on planet media.

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The first one-month Vajrayana Seminary occurred at Shambhala Mountain Center in the summer of 2002. A few Sutrayana Seminaries had already happened at that point. The three-month seminary had always been the gate to enter into vajrayana practices. The way it was done was that the students would get vajrayana transmission at the end of seminary, and would have to come back later to a regional centre in order to be introduced to ngöndro, the so-called preliminary practices. This time, Rinpoche gave the transmission at the end of the first week and one of the main aspects of Vajrayana Seminary became the actual introduction to ngöndro. People would have the occasion to become familiar with this sometime challenging practice within the environment of seminary and the presence of the guru. That year he also started giving systematic commentary on each part of ngöndro practice, that he completed later in the fall at a Vajra Assembly at Karmê Chöling. Some of these teachings, as well as others that he gave further at other seminaries, were published in 2008 as the book *Adhishthana, The View and Practice of Ngöndro*.

On 6 October 2002, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche took a new step in his reorganization of the community. He decided to appoint a President of Shambhala. This position had previously been held by his father, the Vajra Regent and himself. He now decided to establish this role as a sepa-

rate position. He selected Richard Reoch, a Canadian, who had previously been the Director of the London Shambhala Centre, the Sakyong's Secretary in Europe, and director of the Stupa consecration. He told the new president: "If you take care of the organization, I will get on with the magic." Simultaneously with making this appointment, he asked that a Shambhala Congress be convened - thus taking steps to strengthen both the centre of the mandala and the entire community.

In March 2003, came out another of these visionary ruling statements called *Treatise on Society and Organization*. It took the form of a letter to President Richard Reoch. It is about the interplay between Shambhala as an organization and as a society. It starts with a basic statement on society.

*The basis of Shambhala society is exemplified by the word sangha, or gendun, "those who follow virtue." The magical element that binds the words "society" and "enlightenment" into "enlightened society" is the wholehearted motivation by individuals to engage personally in a social transformation that will lead to the betterment of the society. Thus we are keen on the meaning that is hidden within the word "enlightenment": to cleanse and purify, to generate and increase. Generating enlightened society begins with the willingness of individuals to look at their own habitual tendencies and take responsibility – first for purifying and cleansing their own outlook and action, and then for generating views and activities that are courageous and liberating. (...) Doing this will help us activate the compassion and wisdom necessary to lead a truly joyous and meaningful life.*

Then the text refers to "many issues that we need to face from a societal point of view." There is the "need to move in a direction where members feel supported." The issue that "some people feel left out because they don't have an active role in the organization." The "need to develop the organization to function as a support for a community that is building a society." And the need to "welcome newcomers to Shambhala society with the proper approach, understanding, and attitude." The Sakyong then talks about the teachings on natural hierarchy and offers this metaphor.

*When it rains, you don't ask the clouds how to grow vegetables. You take the water and you grow vegetables. This is the notion of society. The role of the Sakyong is to provide space, to protect the space, so that flowers can blossom. The sun does not pull the flowers up to the sky; the flowers grow, reaching toward the heaven. If heaven is too close, the flowers will not exert themselves. Therefore the organization is necessary as the extension of the Sakyong's ability to provide and protect space.*

Later that year, in November, President Reoch was instrumental in organizing the first Shambhala Congress. Over 220 participants from North America, Latin America and Europe gathered in Halifax for five days of practicing and connecting, discussions and celebration. The "organization" started reaching another level of networking, articulation of governance, and clarification of big issues. The Sakyong was present at different moments, in particular at a morning session where he accepted to answer any question people had, including some challenging openly the evolution toward Shambhala Buddhism. From then on, there would be such a Congress every two years, with a Mandala Council meeting in the intervening years.

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The year 1976 was pivotal in the manifestation of the Vidyadhara in the west. He started receiving a whole cycle of terma, which lasted until 1981. These are root teachings which, according to

the Tibetan tradition, have been planted in the unconditional realm by Padmasambhava or Gesar of Ling to appear in the mindstream of realized teachers at the appropriate time. Based on these texts, the Vidyadhara introduced the Shambhala teachings. These teachings as such were not new to him. They had been part of his culture and training in Tibet. But up to that point, he had manifested as a Buddhist master, introducing the intricacies of vajrayana buddhism in the west. He was definitively interested in joining the spiritual and the secular, and in societal issues that transcend the personal relationship between teacher and students. But he had never mentioned, at least publicly, the word Shambhala. After 1976, he started manifesting as a king, setting up his household as a court, and introducing his students to the subtleties of enlightened society.

One could see a similar transition in the Sakyong's manifestation in the year 2003. Although he had received the Sakyong empowerment in 1995 and proclaimed Shambhala Buddhism in 2000, he was seen mainly as a Buddhist teacher. He had put a lot of effort in establishing his basic buddhist teachings, particularly in the 1999 and 2000 seminaries, and with the shamatha teachings. He was also continuing the tradition initiated by the Vidyadhara of bestowing regularly the Vajrayogini and Chakrasamvara abhishekas. Actually some students had concerns about him being too buddhist, and letting Shambhala be "swallowed" by Buddhism.

In August 2003, he convened another Kalapa Assembly. The Sakyong presented there deep Shambhala teachings, but those came with the proclamation of the inseparability of the highest teachings of Shambhala, the Shambhala terma, and the highest vajrayana teachings, the dzokchen/mahamudra teachings. In many ways, it was really a "Shambhala Vajrayana" seminar. That was a clear statement that from the point of view of fruition, there can't be any difference between these traditions. Right after that, he went to France for the historical first Vajrayana Seminary in Europe, at Dechen Chöling. There he entered a new group of students into the vajrayana path and ended the teachings with a presentation of *Pema Karpo* a commentary by Mipham the Great on the Seven Line Supplication to Padmasambhava, which is a classical dzokchen teaching.

Later in the fall, he taught a Vajra Assembly at Karmê Chöling where his teachings showed many interrelations between the Shambhala and the dzokchen teachings. He also introduced another short practice that he had composed in December 2002, *The Sadhana of Luminosity*, which is a three-root vajrayana practice of Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyal and Ekajati.

The third Vajrayana Seminary of the new era happened at Shambhala Mountain Center in the summer of 2004. There would now be a three-year cycle, with two successive seminaries at Shambhala Mountain Center and the third one at Dechen Chöling. Another surprise and important transition happened at that seminary. During the first week, while the participants were settling down and practicing, the Sakyong wrote/received *The Primordial Rigden, The Magical Heart of Shambhala*. This is a ngöndro liturgy, a preliminary practice that leads to a particular empowerment, the Rigden abhisheka, that introduces a sadhana practice called Werma. From now on, that ngöndro would be the practice introduced at Vajrayana Seminary. This was a major step in a profound realignment of the whole Shambhala Buddhist path around the terma received by the Dorje Dradül. In the preamble to this text appears for the first time in print the expression "the vajrayana Shambhala teachings."

Later that year and in the beginning of 2005, the Sakyong completed the Scorpion Seal retreat. One of the final terma texts received in 1981 by the Dorje Dradül is called *The Scorpion Seal of the Golden Sun*. This text introduces advanced Shambhala practices. It is the basis for the Werma sadhana as well as the Rigden abhisheka. It contains also the description of a retreat practice. Many times, the Dorje Dradül mentioned that he wanted to do this retreat but for some reasons it never happened. For this retreat to become available to students, it first had to be done by a sakyong. Many times during the preceding years, senior students had requested Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche to do this retreat. He had finally decided that the proper conditions had been gathered and that was the appropriate time. For that occasion, a special cabin was built at Kalapa Valley, in Cape Breton, the land that had been discovered by the Dorje Dradül many years before and recognized as a particular power spot for the Shambhala lineage.

In the context of that retreat, the Sakyong also wrote important texts including the actual Rigden abhisheka text, a feast liturgy for the Werma sadhana, and a practice called *Dharmaraja Guru Yoga*. This practice is a "union with the guru" practice that proclaims and celebrates the inseparability of the two sakyongs in the practitioner's heart, "firmly establishing and blessing the lineage of Sakyongs in this world." He also wrote a general letter to the sangha describing the context of his retreat, explaining what it means to place the terma received by the Dorje Dradül at the heart of our tradition, and announcing that he would offer the Rigden abhisheka for the first time that coming summer. Here are some excerpts from this letter.

*Today I am writing to you from Kalapa Valley in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, where I am engaged in the Scorpion Seal retreat. This feels very auspicious. The land is blanketed in pure white snow, and we are near the Keltic Lodge, where the Druk Sakyong, the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, first gave transmission for The Roar of the Werma, which was his mind terma. (...)*

*As the Vidyadhara said, the secular and the spiritual are one: each depends upon the other. Gesar depends upon Milarepa, and Milarepa depends upon Gesar. This is what we call the Shambhala lineage – not polarizing the sacred and the secular. For truly, if we are to be successful in life, we need to rule the spiritual and the secular. This is known as All-Victorious, an epithet for the Buddha.*

*I feel that my retreat here, even though it is a personal one, is not only some kind of maturation process for myself, but for the entire community. (...)*

*The Vidyadhara's intention was for Shambhala - especially the terma that he revealed – to be the basis of our view, practice, and meditation. He often talked about Shambhala as the container of the Buddhist teachings, as the mountain that supports and protects them. What we consider the Shambhala lineage is unique and vast, stemming from the many traditions that the Vidyadhara himself held and practiced, as well as those that he initiated. (...)*

*The Shambhala teachings are unique in that they present a world that we do not abandon, but rather engage in. We understand the vicissitudes of suffering while trying to nurture our inherent basic goodness and the Ashe, the confidence of all. These teachings encourage us not to have our private stash of spirituality hidden away. They say that a genuine spiritual practice is having no privacy and laying one's life and mind for the welfare of others. This is what we call enlightened society, enlightened world, or the kingdom of Shambhala. (...)*

*The Druk Sakyong has been gone for a while. Some of us knew him – either well or not so well – and some barely knew him at all. Others never met him. To keep his work, dedication, and memory alive, it is vital that we engage in and continue what was most essential to him. All the sweat and*

*tears that he went through were for a reason: he was genuinely thinking about how to preserve and adapt the teachings. Buddhism has always adapted through changing times, preserving the essence of what enlightenment is and how that fire continues to be handed on for generations to come. (...)*

*It is time to reflect on the vast inheritance we have and realize that none of it must be left behind. We are unique because we are mixing the Nyingma and the Kagyü traditions, as well as the terma of the Druk Sakyong, as well as the practices of Gesar of Ling, and finally the Kalachakra tantra. These five lineages have prominent roles in what we call Shambhala Buddhism.*

In the summer of 2005, at Shambhala Mountain Center, right after teaching the Vajrayana Seminary, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche bestowed for the first time the Rigden abhisheka to a group of around one thousand students. A gigantic tent was set up. A new one-bowl meal practice was designed. The two-day ceremony was powerful and deeply moving, radiating a white atmosphere of peace and luminosity.

In the spring of 2005, rumors and then information had come out that during a representation of Gesar dances at Namdröling monastery, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche had shown interest in the main dancer. This was princess Semo Tseyang, the youngest daughter of His Eminence Namkha Drimed, supreme holder of the Ripa lineage. She and her family were formally invited for tea and the rest is history. The King had found his Queen. The day after bestowing the Rigden abhisheka, the Sakyong and Semo Tseyang were married in a civil service, presided over by the Mayor of Boulder. Then there was a mandala-wide wedding festival, "Blossoming of the Sun", in Halifax in the summer of 2006, and a Tibetan wedding festival hosted by the Ripa family in Orissa, India, in the spring of 2007. In August 2008, in Halifax, His Holiness Penor Rinpoche empowered Khandro Tseyang as the Sakyong Wangmo of the Shambhala lineage.

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The second public book, called *Ruling Your World*, came out in 2005. The cover of the first public book was mainly white, without photograph, very simple and humble. Here the cover is a beautiful head and shoulder photograph of the Sakyong in yellow robes, expressing a sense of confidence and rulership. The book starts with the story of Dawa Sangpo, the first king of Shambhala, meeting the Buddha and asking about the possibility of a genuine spiritual path within the conventional world. The Buddha answers: "If you can develop certainty in the indestructible basic goodness that lies at the heart of everything, then you can rule your world." This is the pith instruction of the Shambhala teachings. This is the path of a sakyong. In the next page, it says:

*The Shambhala teachings have appeared in the west at this particular time to pacify aggression, which obstructs our ability to love and care for one another. Aggression produces fear. Fear produces cowardice; we are afraid even of our own thoughts and are therefore ruled by them. The teachings of Shambhala tell us how to establish peace and confidence. In the potential to discover basic goodness and to bring forth wisdom and compassion in our daily life, we all have what we need to become a sakyong – a Tibetan word that means "earth-protector." What we are protecting is the earth of our innate sanity.*

The main part of the book is structured according to the four dignities of Shambhala, represented by four mythical creatures, which embody aspects of the path of "ruling our world." *Tiger* is the path of training oneself to pay attention. It is based on looking at how we make decisions, mo-

ment by moment. It involves discernment, based on understanding the reality of karma, or interdependence. It is associated with the dignity of meek, which in Tibetan literally means, "knowing what is enough." It leads to the confidence of contentment, the ability to be present with our experience without deceiving oneself through constantly looking for sources of pleasure or confirmation.

The path of the *Lion* is based on discipline, knowing what to cultivate and what to refrain from. This discipline rests on the discernment of the tiger and provides "a container in which we can continue to grow." Tiger is about peace. Lion is about energy and joy, the dignity of perky. It is based on working with doubt and conquering small-mindedness. It is a path of opening to others and learning how to generate love and compassion. It leads to the confidence of "delight in helping others."

Next is the path of the *Garuda*, the mythical bird that can fly endlessly without the need to rest on the reference point of earth. It is the dignity of outrageousness, the ability to face the basic truth of impermanence and death. It is outrageous because one "dares to live beyond hope and fear of what will happen next." This is based on the discovery of space, the mind that is free from fixation. It is a path of letting go of our solid views about how things are supposed to be. It happens first within the training ground of sitting meditation. "Letting go of thoughts as we watch them rise and fall in meditation, we've become familiar with the space beyond our discursiveness." This path leads to the confidence of equanimity, the ability to "bring our mind back to the fluid nature of ourselves and the world, the dreamlike quality of appearances."

*Dragon* is the fruition path. The dragon is "a symbol of rulers and master meditators." It is associated with the dignity of inscrutable, because conventional mind cannot fathom that kind of mind. It is based on the discovery of selflessness. This confidence is the profundity and brilliance of wisdom. "With the wisdom mind of the dragon, life itself becomes the source of our energy." At this level, relating with karma and interdependence has to do with "attracting auspiciousness."

The last part of the book starts with a description of a practice called "ground lungta" which involves raising the energies of those four dignities as something we can feel in our body. It ends with a description of the "six ways of ruling", which encapsulate how to bring these teachings into the activities of daily life.

When this book came out, few people realized how meaningful it was in the context of this major cultural evolution that the Sakyong was finally able to implement in the Shambhala centres all over the world. During this period, a curriculum committee had been set up to propose a new, unified curriculum of study for people entering Shambhala. The Sakyong's command was very clear. He wanted newcomers to be presented with a series of programs that would introduce the richness of our tradition, showing the relationship between the teaching streams at the basis of the Shambhala lineage. He wanted to move away from putting newcomers into this puzzling choice situation of having to decide whether they were more interested in Buddhism or in Shambhala. On top of that, he asked for "less like school and more like life."

The resulting curriculum evolved through multiple versions and several pilot experiments. It is still being developed, under the responsibility of Kalapa Acharya Adam Lobel and Executive

Director Carolyn Mandelker. The entry program is called *The Way of Shambhala* and brings together weekend programs of what used to be Shambhala Training, with related classes. The overall idea is to present what comes out as a natural correlation between the four dignities of Shambhala and the three yanas or vehicles of the Buddhist path. The hinayana teachings on karma and samsara are related to the path of tiger. The mahayana teachings on relative and absolute bodhichitta are associated respectively with the paths of lion and garuda. And the vajrayana teachings are obviously at the dragon level. This structure and content in many ways reproduce what is found in the *Ruling Your World* book.

This change of curriculum was not just a rearrangement of content. It included the introduction of more interactive teaching approaches, in particular the use of dialogue exercises, and encouraged the teachers to work more together. This led to a process of revision of how teachers are trained and the creation of a Teacher Academy, under the leadership of Acharya Judith Simmer-Brown, that teachers are expected to participate in on a somewhat regular basis. This led also to the recent creation of a new category of senior teachers, called *shastris*, who are associated to a particular center, or region, and have a leadership role in terms of holding the view of the Shambhala Buddhist path and working with the teachers in that respect.

Another aspect of that cultural transformation came with a thangka, or sacred painting, that became available in the fall of 2005. It portrays the Primordial Rigden, a deity representation of the essence of enlightenment according to the Shambhala lineage. It was designed by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and executed by the artist Cynthia Moku. That became the main thangka in front of a new Shambhala Buddhist shrine that replaced the two shrines, Buddhist and Shambhala, that most centers had in their main shrine room.

As part of the curriculum development, the Sakyong also committed to teach two programs addressed to beginners, a teaching weekend called *Enlightened World* and a one-week practice retreat called *Sangha Retreat*. The first Enlightened World happened at Shambhala Mountain center in August 2007, and the first Sangha Retreat, at the same place, in July 2009. The teachings of those two programs were produced as DVD sets by Shambhala Media.

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A *Vajra Assembly* is a particular kind of weekend program that was initiated by the Vidyadhara in 1976. It was restricted to his vajrayana students, people who had done the three-month seminary and received vajrayana transmission from him. From 1976 until 1983, he taught fourteen of them, usually alternating between Boulder and Karmê Chöling. It was an occasion for the vajrayana students to gather, and practice and study with the guru. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche continued this tradition for many years. The last one occurred at Karmê Chöling at the end of September 2005. It was a five-day program where he taught on the Vidyadhara's terma.

In July 2006, at Shambhala Mountain Center, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche started a new kind of post vajrayana seminary program, now a two-week retreat. It was called *Shambhala Dzokchen Retreat*. Participants were grouped during the day according to their main practice and practiced together lead by an acharya. On particular days or evenings, everybody would get together to receive teachings from the Sakyong.

Between 2006 and 2008, several of these retreats were organized at the major retreat centers: Shambhala Mountain Center, Karmê Chöling, Dechen Chöling and Dorje Denma Ling. Eventually they were called *Garchen*, meaning "Great Gathering." The Sakyong was gathering his vajrayana students, both those who had received vajrayana transmission from him and those who had received transmission from the Vidyadhara and wanted to continue studying with him. He started giving more detailed teachings and instructions on Shambhala Vajrayana.

At the last of these gatherings, at Karmê Chöling, in June 2008, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche made the proclamation that he was now ready to open the Scorpion Seal retreat to all Shambhala warriors having completed the proper preparation. He said:

*I have long awaited this time, an appropriate time when we could clarify our unique Shambhala path. I initiated this process with the Primordial Rigden ngöndro and then with the Rigden abhisheka. Now those practitioners who have established a good relationship with the Werma sadhana can enter in stages into the Scorpion Seal.*

Those "stages" became a new series of retreats called *Scorpion Seal Assembly* that started at Karmê Chöling in June 2009. Finally the whole post vajrayana seminary path had been clarified. The study and practice of the Shambhala terma received by the Dorje Dradül is at the center of this path. It culminates with the Scorpion Seal retreat. But it can branch out into a whole array of other practices, including the Kagyü ngöndro and the Vajrayogini and Chakrasamvara sadhanas that the Vidyadhara introduced. This is the path of profundity, available to all the students who are inspired by it and willing to exert themselves in that way. This by no way is expected from everybody. Shambhala is basically about vastness, offering a variety of occasions and methods to wake up, to multitudes of beings. But profundity and vastness, or brilliance, have to come together.

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On November 10, 2009, in Halifax, in the midst of the Fourth Shambhala Congress, His Eminence Namkha Drime Rinpoche, at the request of his daughter Khandro Dechen Chöying, the Sakyong Wangmo, performed the Tenshuk Ceremony for the longevity of the Kongma Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. This was the official entrance into the one-year retreat. As an offering to the Sakyong for this occasion, the Sakyong Wangmo led the first performance executed by Shambhalians of Lingdro, the Gesar sacred dance.

On February 14, 2010, at the end of his annual address recorded from his retreat, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche announced that he and the Sakyong Wangmo were expecting a child. On August 11, 2010, a little princess was born, named Drukmo Yeshe Sarasvati Ziji Mukpo. In a letter to the Shambhala community written a few weeks later, Rinpoche recalled:

*Throughout the delivery, I was struck by the sheer power and emotionality of the birthing process; I did whatever I could to support my wife. Watching her handle the birth, my respect and admiration for Khandro-la grew tremendously. She was a true warrior. Finally, when Jetsun Drukmo was born, she came out and gave a big cry. It was 10:24 AM on August 11. Joy, tears, and laughter filled the room at that moment. (...)*

*I am struck by how different the Kalapa Court feels with Jetsun Drukmo in it. It has brought a feeling of vitality, warmth, and expansiveness. The first few nights neither Khandro-la nor myself got much sleep, from being both excited and nervous. Khandro-la was a natural mother, but I was a very anxious father. Jetsun Drukmo was so small and so delicate, it took time to feel comfortable handling her. But then the tentativeness gave way to relaxation and sheer joy. After the initial period, I was able to hold her; and in fact, I have become quite a proficient burper.*

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In November 2010 came out the *Letter of the Morning Sun*, the most recent letter from the monarch of the kingdom of Shambhala. This is a very personal letter. Writing from his retreat, the Sakyong says:

*The purpose of writing this letter is to express some of my inner thoughts, experiences, and intentions to you. After this year of retreat, I wish to have a more open and direct relationship with all of you as Shambhala warriors. Thus far, over the last twenty years as leader of Shambhala, I have refrained from expressing myself as fully as I wished because our community was going through a healing process, as well as a process of maturing. At this point I feel we are all mature enough to take a deep breath and reflect on what Shambhala is, and more importantly, what its future will be.*

One can see this letter as some sort of culmination of the last twenty years. It is a powerful letter that offers a fresh formulation of the heart teachings of Shambhala and conveys a sense of urgency. He is now clearly relating profundity with vastness.

*First and foremost, Shambhala is based upon a societal vision. Even though it can be seen as a path by which an individual can travel into the great depths of enlightenment, this journey has a greater purpose than that. Shambhala vision is changing the whole social paradigm. For humanity not only to survive, but to flourish and prosper, the whole question and purpose of social existence needs to be addressed. (...)*

*If the Shambhala teachings are to benefit the world, our very own community must now begin to embody these core principles: courageousness, kindness, dependability, skillfulness, and confidence. I am touched as I see that we are beginning to take on some of these traits. (...)*

*If Shambhala as a vision, a lineage, and a community is to have any real effect on the world, the next ten years are essential. We must now begin to organize, train, and develop ourselves with greater commitment and determination. Therefore, I ask all Shambhalians to see the next ten years as a time to truly challenge ourselves. (...)*

*The success of our community will depend on what kind of culture we create. In that light, the appeal of Shambhala and our ability to benefit, influence, and inspire the world will come directly from our ability to manifest kindness, embody goodness, and create a genuine feeling of delightfulness. Therefore culture and decorum are essential elements. Ultimately, the greatest influence on us and the larger world is the social culture we are fostering. (...)*

The letter goes on describing more precisely what needs to be done. The Sakyong also asks people to contemplate and answer three questions that for him "have been very provocative and illuminating." He wants to enter into the next era of Shambhala with "unity, rapport, and clarity."

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A lot has happened in the last twenty years. It certainly looks like there is a lot more to come. I hope that this short historical survey will help us see and appreciate the incredible extent and quality of the current sakyong's activity.

*May the Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche live long.  
May the lineage initiated by the Great Vidyadhara Chökyi Gyatso flourish for many kalpas.  
May all beings feel the warmth of the Great Eastern Sun.*

Shastri Benoît Côté  
Halifax, 18 February 2011  
Slightly revised, 6 December 2011

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