



THE KALAPA COURT

28 June 2010

Dear Student Warriors of Shambhala,

It is with great joy and a full heart that I write to all of you at the midway point of my one-year retreat. As many of you know, I have undertaken this retreat in the year of the Iron Tiger. According to Tibetan astrology, it was considered an obstacle year, as well as being a pivotal year for myself. Also, I am roughly the same age as my father, the first Sakyong, Dorje Dradül of Mukpo, when he became ill and passed away. Therefore, I have reduced my activity and entered into this retreat. I entered retreat with a *tenchök* ceremony, a traditional ceremony asking the teacher to remain and teach. This ceremony, requested by the Sakyong Wangmo, was conducted in November, after which I removed myself from the day-to-day activities of Shambhala.

Since that time, over the past six months, I have had the opportunity to practice and reflect. This has been a powerful and meaningful time. More than ever, I feel how fortunate we are to have these teachings. Especially recently, we have seen a series of natural and manmade disasters. It is as if the earth is asking us to be kind to each other and to itself. Now, more than any other time in history, the fate of our own planet is in our hands.

Our future increasingly comes down to how we as human beings conduct ourselves. We have achieved tremendous power, but that power is very volatile. As we become more successful at material progress, we cannot let lag behind the development of our own mind and heart. Although possessions and comforts do help ease the suffering of the body, they do not directly address the mind and heart. As we gain more material mastery and therefore have more physical comfort, if our mental anguish is not addressed, the disparity becomes greater. That feeling of dissatisfaction and uneasiness can develop into animosity and hatred. It is at that point that we lash out. It is therefore necessary for us to address not just material physical needs, but also psychological and mental needs. That is particularly what the Shambhala teachings address; how we can approach life from a very basic point of goodness, inspiration, and possibility. As the teachings say, each human mind and heart must be put in the cradle of loving-kindness.

We must each have the opportunity to develop our inherent qualities of strength, love, kindness, and thoughtfulness. If these aspects of our mind can be developed at the same rate as our material progress, a natural harmony and balance can take place. One of the key things about these teachings is that we are being asked to not run away from the world, but to engage in our life in the world. With bravery and inspiration, our own lives can become the natural training ground of goodness. In some ways it is very simple; we need to stop now and think about who we want to be, and then just do it. When we find ourselves wandering from the principles that are close to our heart, before the

currents of life put us adrift, by the power of our own mind and intention we need to reorient ourselves in a direction that we feel is worthwhile.

Especially now with a world full of choice, entertainment, and distractions, we can endlessly fascinate ourselves—day after day, month after month, year after year—and at the end come up empty-handed. The world itself may not be intentionally vindictive, but without inner force of strength and conviction, we can easily be fooled. It is therefore necessary for each individual to develop a sense of contentment; otherwise our mind will be plagued with desire. When this occurs, we are endlessly unhappy and never satisfied.

In order to make potent and helpful decisions, we need a few moments daily to self-reflect, looking at the good and potent potential that lies within. At that moment when we come face-to-face with our inner purity and strength, we need to have conviction and determination to bring those qualities out into our life. If we can do that, then throughout our life, we will develop and grow. As that growth becomes manifest, we feel that our life has meaning, and there is more conviction in our demeanor. Inspiration naturally ensues. Even in great difficulty, we remain determined and self-possessed. This is not egohood, but what the Shambhala teachings refer to as bravery. We are not simply trying to get by; we are engaged.

These days, even though we may feel overwhelmed and weak, we can still help the world and guide it in a positive direction. Just like the great warrior-bodhisattvas of the past, we cannot be disheartened if we are thwarted in our attempts or not recognized for our efforts. Rather, there is a sense of satisfaction

and joy that we have the possibility to benefit others even a little bit. I encourage all of you as Shambharians to take a moment and reflect on your lives, even if things are not going well. Find something you feel grateful for, foster that sense of appreciation, and bring that enthusiasm into the world. In this way, the seeds of warriorship are born.

I cannot express how much I appreciate the effort and determination that you all have, for being on this journey is not easy. But it is through your determination and courage that I myself am inspired. Since the beginning of my retreat, I have been especially delighted that our leaders and acharyas have stepped up to take on responsibility. Not only that, but they appear to be doing it cheerfully. This shows that our community is maturing. This notion of community is essential during this time. Our ability to interface and be kind is an essential step to transforming not only our own community, but also the world as a whole. This principle of engaging enlightened attitude is at the core of the Shambhala teachings. I leave you with these thoughts for now.

At this point, I will conduct a few key teachings, which is necessary for the continuation of our Shambhala path. However, as most of you know, the main focus for myself at this time is that Khandro-La and I are establishing our family. She is in very good spirits, and as you can imagine, we are both nervous and delighted. I do intend, however, to continue my retreat through the remainder of the year, concluding it after Shambhala Day. I think of you all, every single day.

I keep you in my heart, and send you much love and blessings.

The Sakyong