



SATDHARMA

AN HISTORIC DAY IN OJAI

A Satdharma Community Gathering with Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche
and Mr. Patrick Sweeney

May 29, 2005

The Satdharma community gathered at the Ojai Valley Dharma Center in Ojai, California to honor the Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, the head of the Shambhala Mandala. Mr. Patrick Sweeney, the Head of the Satdharma Mandala, and Mr. Richard Reoch, the president of Shambhala were joined in attendance with Shibata Sensei XX and Lady Lila Rich, the widow of the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin.

This gathering was a defining moment for the Satdharma community as well as many students of the Vidyadhara, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche who felt a strong connection to the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin. The Satdharma community was established when a group of students moved to Ojai with the Vajra Regent, including the Vajra Regent's dharma heir, Mr. Patrick Sweeney. While these practitioners have worked tirelessly for fifteen years in Ojai to maintain and share the heart of the Vidyadhara's teachings as expressed by the Vajra Regent, they experienced a painful separation from the Vidyadhara's mandala, of which many had been an integral part before the Vajra Regent's death. This gathering represented a fundamental reconnection between two groups of people who share the same heart of devotion towards the Vidyadhara and his Vision of the Great Eastern Sun,

The foundation for this gathering was established on the previous day, as Mr. Sweeney led the community in a morning of 3-yana practice. This practice period included shamatha/vipashyana, renewal of refuge and bodhisattva vows, and tonglen. It concluded with the Sadhana of Mahamudra. Throughout the practice, Mr. Sweeney emphasized the qualities of openness, compassion and devotion, particularly when working with challenging emotional obscurations, such as anger.

The purpose of the gathering was to acknowledge the significant step in the rapprochement between the Shambhala Mandala and the Satdharma Mandala that was expressed in the form of a Letter of Agreement presented by Mr. Reoch. The agreement re-confirmed the proper place of the Vajra Regent within the lineage of the Vidyadhara, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, and acknowledged the Vajra Regent's dharma heir, Patrick Sweeney, as a holder of that lineage stream from the Vidyadhara,

To begin the gathering, and to rouse the heart of devotion, Mr. Sweeney led the assembly in supplicating the Buddhist and Shambhala lineages, performing a lhasang, and chanting the Offering Section of the Sadhana of Mahamudra. Then Mr. Reoch, with great dignity

and a solemn air of commitment, read the full text of the Letter of Agreement. Following this reading, there were comments by Mr. Sweeney, Shibata Sensei, offerings by Mr. Sweeney and finally comments by the Sakyong.

It is due to the blessings of the lineage, in particular Venerable Thrangu Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, and the profound heart connection between the Sakyong and Mr. Sweeney that this agreement could come about.

The agreement between these two mandalas is an acknowledgement that there is a shared samaya in perpetuating the world of the Vidyadhara, and that the Sakyong and Mr. Sweeney hold different but complementary responsibilities in this endeavor. On the part of the Sakyong, it is an acknowledgement that Mr. Sweeney is the legitimate heir of the Vidyadhara's Vajrayana Buddhist lineage through the Vajra Regent, and is fully authorized to pass on the teachings and transmissions that were entrusted to him. On the part of Mr. Sweeney, it is an acknowledgement that the Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche is the sovereign and protector of the spiritual and temporal authority of the Kingdom of Shambhala, and that Mr. Sweeney's work serves to further the Vidyadhara's vision of creating an enlightened society.

The Letter of Agreement makes five other main points:

1. Satdharma will hold a seat on the Mandala Council of the Shambhala Mandala while remaining an autonomous institution within the aspirations of the Shambhala Charter.
2. Mr. Sweeney will have full access to all of the texts and translations that are needed for him to offer to his students the teachings and practices he has previously received and been empowered to transmit. Mr. Sweeney will support his students in receiving teachings and transmissions from the Sakyong, and likewise the Sakyong will support them in receiving teachings and transmissions from Mr. Sweeney.
3. Lady Lila Rich was honored for her formative contribution to the Shambhala teachings. She wishes to offer her experience with the Shambhala teachings to the entire mandala. A network of voluntary support will be developed to provide for the material needs of her and her family.
4. The stupa that was built and resides in Ojai, and was consecrated by Thrangu Rinpoche, will be the stupa for the Vajra Regent for the entire Shambhala Mandala. The stupa nearing completion at Shambhala Mountain Center is to be known as The Heart Stupa of Wisdom Transmission. It will symbolize the devotion through which the dharma is transmitted by realized teachers to their students, of which the Vajra Regent is the primary example.
5. The Sakyong and Mr. Sweeney will contribute to and support the development of a process of purification and inquiry to address the confusion, pain, and anger that many people experienced in the period before, during and after the death of the Vajra Regent.

Following Mr. Reoch's reading of the letter, Mr. Sweeney expressed his tremendous gratitude to the Sakyong for never giving up on their friendship and for maintaining a sacred view towards the transmission that the Vidyadhara gave to his Regent. He stated that the Sakyong has the hardest job in the Buddhist world, and thanked him for being a model for devotion, selflessness and responsibility. He emphasized the importance of the Vajra Regent as an expression of the Vidyadhara's confidence that enlightened mind can

be transmitted from East to West and that the students of the Vajra Regent experience the Vidyadhara and the Vajra Regent as inseparable spiritual entities.

Mr. Sweeney pointed out that the Vajra Regent held two distinct seats within the Vidyadhara's world: the seat of regent, with the responsibility of maintaining the Vidyadhara's world after his death, and the seat of dharma heir, with the responsibility to teach the Vajrayana and to continue the lineage that had been passed to him. Upon his death, his regency dissolved, and that administrative responsibility for the mandala was transferred to the Sakyong. His spiritual lineage had already been passed to Mr. Sweeney, who has maintained that continuity for the last 15 years. Mr. Sweeney also renewed his commitment to Trungpa Rinpoche's unique insight that for the buddhadharma to flourish in the West it must be seated within the vision of the Great Eastern Sun, and offered all of his support to the Sakyong to fulfill this vision.

At Mr. Sweeney's request, Shibata Sensei addressed the assembly. Shibata Sensei expressed his great joy at the Sakyong's engagement to Semo Tseyang and the current reunion in Ojai. He emphasized the three qualities of good manners as the proper way to treat each other, a good heart as the way to support each other in the noble intention to practice the dharma for the benefit of others, and loyalty to one's teachers, one's fellow students, and all beings, as the path. Sensei was particularly pleased that Kyudo could be part of the united mandala throughout the world.

At that point, on behalf of everyone, Mr. Sweeney made offerings to the Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. First, he offered a full Shambhala bow as an expression of the aspiration to serve the vision of enlightened society and the current manifestation of the Sakyong. Second, he offered a ya, symbolic of the mutual bond of warriorship. Finally he offered a mandala, an expression of opening one's heart to the mandala of the Vidyadhara's brilliance that the Sakyong holds and offering one's whole life to the vision of the lineage.

Following these offerings, the Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and Mr. Sweeney offered each other katas as an acknowledgement of each other's lineage transmission. Then they both offered katas to a picture of the Vidyadhara as an expression of their mutual devotion and loyalty to the vision of the Vidyadhara, the Dorje Dradul of Mukpo. Finally, they both offered katas to the stupa for the Vajra Regent which rests on the main shrine.

At the request of Mr. Sweeney, the Sakyong then addressed the assembly. He expressed his joy at being in Ojai and his devotion to the Dorje Dradul, an extraordinary tülku who took on his western students completely and saw a vision for the future based on the goodness, wisdom and compassion that he called the Kingdom of Shambhala. He pointed out that since the future has not been determined, one can always take a very fresh approach.

As the Sakyong, the Earth Protector, he emphasized that one of his main jobs is to guard the teachings of the Vidyadhara, and, within that, he appreciates being able to work and practice with Mr. Sweeney as the holder of the Vajra Regent's lineage. He expressed his

gratitude for the Vajra Regent's fundamental contribution to the Shambhala teachings and for his personal relationship with the Vajra Regent when he was alive. He expressed his trust and support for Mr. Sweeney and his enthusiasm for working together in an open-minded way to continue the Vidyadhara's work into the future. Finally he offered a blessing for the community called Tashi Jopa (*The Verses of the Eight Auspicious Ones* by Khenchen Mipham), which is traditionally offered when something auspicious is beginning.

To conclude the gathering in the shrine room, Mr. Sweeney led the assembly in supplications for the longevity of the lineage teachers, two chants for fulfilling the aspirations of the Vidyadhara, one written by Thrangu Rinpoche and one written by the Vajra Regent, and the chant for fulfilling the aspirations of the Vajra Regent, written by Thrangu Rinpoche. Following the two dedications of merit and the Invocation, the gathering was sealed with a hearty rendition of the Shambhala Anthem.

The entire assembly including the Sakyong and Mr. Sweeney then adjourned to Changchup Dzong, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Sweeney, for a reception. There were toasts in true Shambhala style, expressions of longing, devotion and appreciation for the lineage elders as well as the current lineage holders. The atmosphere was characterized by one of unity, friendship, and mutual appreciation for the journey that began when the Vidyadhara decided to plant the victory banner of dharma in the West.