

An Open Letter to all students who practice under the protection of the vast Dharma umbrella of the glorious guru, Vidyadhara the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche:

Homage to the Three Jewels, the lineage gurus of the Kagyü and Nyingma, and the Rigdens of Shambhala.

I would like to share my personal experience of the history and evolution of the lineages that the greater sangha have inherited from the Vidyadhara the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche. My wish is that these words serve to further communication and enhance mutual understanding, so that we, the students of the Vidyadhara's extended mandala may fulfill his wishes and realize our love and connection with one another.

My husband, Thomas Rich, first introduced me to Trungpa Rinpoche. I met Rinpoche, his wife Diana and their baby son, in the spring of 1971 in Los Angeles, California. I learned that Trungpa Rinpoche, having escaped Tibet during the invasion by Communist China, had made his way through India to England and eventually to North America. Already fluent in English, he embraced the people of America whole-heartedly, offering them the profound view and practice of the buddhadharma. Both my husband and I immediately felt a strong connection, and wanted to be closer to him.

One of his two residences was at Tail of the Tiger in Vermont, now known as Karmê Chöling. In September 1971, when I was 23 years of age and my husband 27, we moved to nearby Kirby, Vermont to begin studying with Trungpa Rinpoche. Not long afterward, Rinpoche summoned Narayana, (as Thomas Rich was known then) for a private audience. During that audience he asked my husband to be his dharma heir, saying, "I want you to be my successor, my Gampopa." I was waiting outside, and saw him emerge from the meeting wearing a khata (ceremonial white scarf) and carrying a signed copy of *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, in which Rinpoche had written, "To my son, with love for Kagyü Family." He sat silently during the forty-minute drive back to our farmhouse. When he was ready to speak, he told me what had happened at their meeting. Rinpoche had told him that after his death it would be Narayana's responsibility to carry on the Kagyü lineage and transmit it to another student in the future. Rinpoche also told him that if he should accept this relationship with the lineage, he could never go back on it. He simply replied, "Yes."

This was a landmark event in the lives of Trungpa Rinpoche and the American man who would become his successor. Thomas Rich was formally empowered as Vajra Regent in 1976. He was endowed with the name: *Karma Chökyi Dawa Legpei Lodrö Ösel Tendzin Choglê Namgyal*, meaning "Karma, Moon of Dharma, Excellent Intellect, Radiant Holder of the Teachings, Victorious in All Directions." Six months later this appointment was confirmed and sealed in Boulder, Colorado by His Holiness, the Gyalwa Karmapa XVI, supreme head of the Karma Kagyü Lineage.

During the empowerment ceremony, Trungpa Rinpoche said:

“This is a long-awaited situation in the introduction of Buddha-dharma into the Western hemisphere, which has become a very large and energetic task.... There is the possibility that members of the sangha, Western people, can take over from the Tibetans. We are not trying to transplant culture, particularly. Our main concern is to transplant Buddha-dharma, with or without culture. Buddhism is such a clear, precise and sane, non-theistic tradition that it can fit in anywhere....

“And as for my relationship to Ösel Tendzin, that there has been a definite growth in his development is almost doubtless, completely doubtless and finally doubtless. My original inspiration concerning his crystal quality of brilliance made me think that he would be the only person who could be my dharma heir and regent. I am honored, and in fact I feel great, that I am the first teacher in this country who actually can trust his own student, a special student, and make him Regent. So I am ready to make this transition and to hand over my whole being to him. In a sense I have already done so, but this ceremony makes it official.”

In the ensuing years, Ösel Tendzin and I, along with our growing family, lived and worked along side Trungpa Rinpoche, his students and family, to further expand the Buddha-dharma in the West, under the banner of Vajradhatu/Nalanda Inc., centered in Boulder, Colorado.

The path of devotion is one of the Kagyü lineage’s central teachings. The Vidyadhara often presented his regent as an example of how to be a student in this lineage and how to practice devotion. They referred to one another as “father” and “son” in many personal and literary contexts and it was in this manner that the Mahamudra Lineage teaching – the practice of devotion, mahamudra – was made tangible for the students. Rinpoche shared with me on many occasions what strong love he had for my husband, the Vajra Regent. Theirs was a spiritual apprenticeship along the lines of the earliest history of the Kagyü Lineage: the era of Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa, and so on, as is invoked in the Kagyü Lineage supplication chant. The vajrayana teachings, having been carried from the land of their inception, India, and planted in Tibet by Marpa the Translator, was now making the leap to another land and culture in America.

As the Vajra Regent was absorbing the wisdom of his teacher’s Tibetan Buddhist heritage, Trungpa Rinpoche was expanding his skillful means, becoming more and more conversant with modern Western culture. By auspicious coincidence they created a new kind of East/West hybrid flower of wisdom and compassion, presented by two gentlemen in suits and ties, one a traditionally trained Tibetan master, the other his American protégé. Their relationship was the source of great encouragement for the practitioners and a model for the bonds of affection within the entire mandala. We learned what it was to be a vajra family. This is not to say or imply that there was no friction, jealousy or a myriad of other emotions at play – as there would be in any family or society – but that there was a great sense of shared delight and common purpose to fulfill the promise of the precious opportunity to study under such a remarkable master as Trungpa Rinpoche.

From 1969 to 1976 Rinpoche focused his teaching activity on the three yantras of the buddhadharma: the establishment of the Vajradhatu Seminary programs, the founding of

Naropa Institute for contemplative studies, the development of Rocky Mountain Dharma Center (now known as Shambhala Mountain Center), Karmê Chöling retreat centers, and the hosting of the first visit of His Holiness Karmapa XVI to America, to name some highlights. Prior to his formal empowerment as Vajra Regent in August of 1976, Ösel Tendzin was serving as a board member in the newly established (1973) organization known as Vajradhatu. He dedicated much enthusiasm and leadership to those undertakings, raising money and helping to articulate the vision of Trungpa Rinpoche to the sangha.

In the period following 1976, many more creative endeavors were undertaken and the Vajra Regent, now in his official capacity, began to assume more and more responsibility for teaching and administration. He traveled widely to teach and administer refuge and bodhisattva vows and give vajrayana transmissions in the increasing number of Dharmadhatus (city centers). He was made, “Director of the First Class” for Vajradhatu/Nalanda Inc.—a lifetime appointment and special designation he shared only with the Vidyadhara.

It was during this phase of the Vidyadhara’s dharma activity that the *terma* (mind treasure) of the royal lineage of Shambhala arose and was codified in the root texts and commentaries he taught us. A curriculum was developed for the newly envisioned Shambhala Training program, co-founded by the Vidyadhara and the Vajra Regent. A new— and concentric—court/government mandala was articulated to contain and manifest the “secular” wisdom teachings of the enlightened society of Shambhala vision. Everyone who was in the administration of Vajradhatu and the family of the Vidyadhara were given added “Shambhala” titles and responsibilities. The Vidyadhara’s title was Sakyong, Dorje Dradul of Mukpo (earth protector, indestructible warrior of the Mukpo family). The Vajra Regent was dubbed, Katham Sikyong (command seal holder) and generally referred to as Lord Chancellor.

As the Vidyadhara began to manifest Shambhala vision, and we students were practicing the special Shambhala practices, the great Nyingmapa vajra master, His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche was invited and requested by the Vidyadhara to perform a Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo enthronement empowerment for the Vidyadhara and his wife Lady Diana Mukpo. Sometime after that, the Vidyadhara’s eldest son, Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo, upon turning sixteen years old, was invested by the Vidyadhara as the Sawang (earth lord), and designated as the successor to the Sakyong and the holder of the royal lineage of Shambhala. The Vajra Regent, as Lord Chancellor was responsible for helping educate the Sawang in the Shambhala principles.

Inspired by the vision of Shambhala, on the occasion of the Sawang’s birthday in 1979, the Vajra Regent wrote a stirring poem of praise and aspiration. So it appeared that the profound and brilliant Kingdom of Shambhala would carry on, as would the glorious Buddhist lineage from Tilopa to the present day in the persons of the Vidyadhara’s two “sons”: one a family lineage, the other a wisdom transmission lineage. The dharma activities of Vajradhatu were in full swing by that time with thousands of students from North and South America and Europe participating in programs throughout the network

of Dharmadhatus and retreat centers. The Vajra Regent continued on in his role as principal teacher and second in command to the Vidyadhara, while the Sawang commenced with his high school education.

Another historic development in the annals of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's work in the West was the relocation of Vajradhatu's international headquarters from Boulder, Colorado, to Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. It had been in planning for a few years, when he directed the Vajra Regent to move his family there in the summer of 1985. He was to establish his family and the Dorje Dzong, Halifax center, as well as a residence for the Vidyadhara in advance of Rinpoche's anticipated move in a few years. Many other students from around the United States began the immigration process so that by the time the Vidyadhara arrived, several hundreds of his students and their families were already there.

The schedule for the Vidyadhara's move was pushed forward to the fall of 1986. He arrived and was offered the Vajra Regent's and my home to live in, since there had not been enough time to locate and prepare a second residence for him. Our family moved into temporary lodgings and the Vajra Regent went to work on a new permanent home for us. We were much troubled at that time to see that the Vidyadhara's health appeared to have declined over the past year, but of course we hoped that it would improve once he rested and was able to begin teaching. He always said that his students' practice and devotion prolonged his life.

In December of 1986, in Halifax, a day before the Vajra Regent was to go teach at the New York City Dharmadhātu, he was called to the Kalapa Court (the Vidyadhara's residence). The Vidyadhara wanted to see him. He was in his bedroom and the Regent was called in. He repeated emphatically these words to the Regent, "*power, lineage, authority*" several times and then said, "*Got it?*" Afterwards the Vajra Regent returned home and related the story to me. The next day he left for New York, but before his program was over, I called him to relay the sad news that his guru was in the hospital. He returned immediately to Halifax.

In that month of December 1986, shortly after the Vidyadhara and Lady Diana had taken up residence in Halifax, in the early hours of the morning, the Vidyadhara suffered respiratory arrest and temporary heart failure. He was rushed to the local hospital where they succeeded in resuscitating him, but in the aftermath of the trauma, he never fully recovered. He was nursed around the clock at the Kalapa Court for about five more months. On April 4, 1987, surrounded by his family, the Vajra Regent, others and myself, the Vidyadhara, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche; Sakyong Dorje Dradul of Mukpo passed into Parinirvana. He remained seated in samadhi on his throne seat at the Kalapa Court for three days. His personal physician and the Vajra Regent monitored the signs of the samadhi. Preparations began for the cremation ceremonies at the Karmê Chöling meditation center in Vermont, and invitations were sent out to Tibetan lamas and other dignitaries who had been close with the Vidyadhara during his life. To commemorate his guru's life and supplicate for his rebirth—while awaiting everyone to gather—the Vajra Regent composed the supplication, *Rainclouds of Wisdom*. His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse

Rinpoche presided over the cremation ceremony. A rainbow appeared in a cloudless sky.

Upon the Vidyadhara's passing into parinirvana in the spring of 1987, Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin assumed the presidency of Vajradhatu. Following the cremation in Vermont, His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche traveled to Halifax where he gave special teachings to the community there. During that visit he conferred upon the Vajra Regent the highest Ati Yana abhisheka, bestowing on him the name *Naljor Wangchuk Lhenkye Drupê Dorje*, meaning "Lord of Yogins, Spontaneously Accomplishing Vajra." The Regent consulted with His Holiness on the future of Trungpa Rinpoche's work and asked his advice on how students should now receive the abhishekas (practice initiations) that had always been given by the Vidyadhara. His Holiness responded that it was now the role of the Vajra Regent to give those empowerments, since he held the direct Vajrayana Buddhist lineage from the Vidyadhara. Soon after, the Vajra Regent fulfilled his designated role as dharma heir by performing the empowerment of Vajrayogini for qualified Vajradhatu students. He was the first Westerner ever to do so.

In the years following the Vidyadhara's parinirvana in April 1987, significant challenges confronted the Vajradhatu community. The initial transition of leadership of Vajradhatu was accomplished reasonably smoothly; largely because of the clear articulation of the vision and organizational structures created by the Vidyadhara. The treasury was quite empty due to the cremation expenses and the tours of visiting Rinpoches. There were some internal tensions between certain sub-groups and individuals within the greater mandala, which is normal and to be expected; but the ultimate test of leadership and unity was about to transpire the following year.

One year or so before moving to Nova Scotia, the Vidyadhara, his personal physician and the Vajra Regent had learned that he (the Vajra Regent) had contracted the HIV virus. This information was not made public at that time. After conducting the 1988 Vajradhatu Seminary, the Vajra Regent went into retreat to work with his health and it was during that time another student in the sangha - known to have been intimate with the Vajra Regent - was diagnosed as HIV positive. When the sangha at large became aware of this and of the fact that the Vajra Regent was also infected with the virus, a wave of fear, sadness and some anger moved through the sangha. Many members felt threatened with contagion and deceived by the fact that they had not been informed of these cases of infection. The Regent's illness, and allegations regarding the circumstances surrounding the withholding of information, led to great confusion and chaos in the sangha, and in time the leadership and many members of the organization became polarized with respect to the Vajra Regent's presidency. The polarization then solidified to the degree that by December of 1988 a majority of the Board of Directors of Vajradhatu drafted and signed a written document calling for the Vajra Regent to step down as President and to cease all teaching activities. The Vidyadhara's widow, Lady Diana Mukpo publicly echoed this call for the Regent's resignation. The Vidyadhara's son, Sawang Ösel Mukpo was abroad studying and did not express an opinion.

The Vajra Regent declined to resign from his position; citing his oath to the Vidyadhara, and his conviction that obstacles on the path of dharma are resolved by re-dedicating

oneself to practice. His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche wrote a letter to the directors of Vajradhatu, counseling them to continue following the leadership of the Vajra Regent as an expression of fulfilling the Vidyadhara's wishes. The majority of the directors felt they could not adopt this advice and they sent emissaries to His Holiness to explain their opinion to him. His Holiness' next advice was for the sangha to practice the Vajrakilaya sadhana for the removal of obstacles and the restoration of harmony. At His Holiness' further request, His Eminence Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche toured through our centers to give instructions and commentaries on the Vajrakilaya practice as well as to listen to everyone's concerns and look for openings through which harmony could be restored. It is difficult to describe how confusing and painful this period in our sangha's history was; it suffices to say that the result was a wrenching apart of our vajra family.

The Vajra Regent continued in an extended retreat in California, supported by a small staff of his Kusung and others: his colleague from the Vajradhatu board of directors, Mr. Karl Springer; his main student and dharma heir, Mr. Patrick Sweeney and his dear friend and patron, Heather Peterson. The children and I moved to California from Halifax and lived nearby in the town of Ojai. Every two weeks we would go to the retreat place for a family visit. The Vajra Regent corresponded with His Holiness Khyentse Rinpoche about his meditation practice and the issues confronting the Vajradhatu community. He stated that he took responsibility for the errors in his understanding that led to the troubles in Vajradhatu. At no time did His Holiness advise the Vajra Regent to resign from his role as the Vidyadhara's lineage holder and President of Vajradhatu. The Venerable Kalu Rinpoche was also a direct support to the Vajra Regent and an inspiration for his retreat practice. He composed a longevity prayer for the Vajra Regent's students to use in their practice. The Venerable Khyenchen Thrangu Rinpoche visited him in retreat as well. Master Gesar Mukpo was also in Ojai during that year, living with the Weinstein family and in my household, and attending high school with my son Anthony. He visited the Vajra Regent on several occasions during that year as well. Those devoted students who were able to move, came to the town of Ojai, California, to be of support to the retreat, the Regent's family and each other. Many other students from around the world stayed in touch through letters.

The Vajra Regent named the retreat place, *Shantigar* (abode of peace), and as his practice - and that of his staff and kusung - deepened, a truly remarkable atmosphere of tranquility surrounded the retreat. As the naturally outgoing personality that he was, it was instructive to me, his old friend, to witness how he was able, through his practice, to resolve all that energy into luminosity—emptiness. He still longed to be reunited with the students of Vajradhatu and had offered to leave retreat for the purpose of teaching the Vajradhatu Seminary in the summer of 1990. The administrators of Vajradhatu remained against his teaching, and given this climate, he decided to remain on retreat. The Vajra Regent then asked the Loppön Lodrö Dorje to preside over the Seminary that year, and I was also sent to be on the Seminary faculty. During one of my periodic visits to his retreat, the Vajra Regent shared with me the regret he felt for any harm that he may have been the cause of, because of a mistake in his understanding. It was uncertain whether there would be the time or opportunity for him to address this matter publicly. He applied himself to his dharma practice and as always, his faith in his guru and in the

buddhadharma was unshakeable.

In order to pacify the upheaval in the sangha and to stabilize things for the future, the Vajra Regent and the members of the Vajradhatu board of directors—in consultation with His Holiness, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche—finally agreed on three key points: 1) the Vajra Regent would remain the leader of Vajradhatu as long as he lived; 2) he retained the authority given to him by the Vidyadhara to name the disciple who would become the next holder of the Kagyü Buddhist lineage of the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche in the West; 3) upon his death, the Vidyadhara's son and heir to the Shambhala Lineage, Sawang Ösel Mukpo would become the next President of Vajradhatu/Nalanda Inc.

At that time (1989-90) the Vajradhatu and Shambhala Lineages established by the Vidyadhara, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche were regarded as representing two distinct lineage streams. The Sawang had not yet proposed “Shambhala Buddhism” as a newly devised unitary school. Sustaining the two lineage streams under one organizational umbrella would have most closely resembled what the Vidyadhara had laid out in principle: in the *Court Vision and Practice*, in teachings given at Kalapa Assemblies, in his Will, and in a commentary to his Will.

In keeping with his vows and the instructions of Trungpa Rinpoche, and with the knowledge that his own health could fail at any time, the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin, while in retreat, empowered the next successor to the Buddhist lineage, inherited from the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche; Mr. Patrick Sweeney - whose refuge name is Trimê Lhawang. The Vajra Regent then sent Mr. Sweeney with a letter of introduction to India to meet His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and present himself as the dharma heir. His Holiness confirmed the spiritual empowerment of Trimê Lhawang and gave blessings and further empowerments to him.

In August 1990, at the request of His Holiness Khyentse Rinpoche, His Eminence Jamgön Kontrul Rinpoche and the Sawang Ösel Mukpo set out for Ojai, California, to meet with the Vajra Regent and confirm the agreed upon succession arrangement. When the Vajra Regent's health took a turn for the worse, His Eminence and the Sawang instead traveled to San Francisco where the Vajra Regent was in hospital. I was there with our two eldest sons, along with Mr. Sweeney, Mr. Karl Springer, and other friends and students. Loppön Lodrö Dorje arrived after completing the teaching of the Vajradhatu Seminary. His Eminence performed a Vajrakilaya puja at the Vajra Regent's bedside, assisted by Lama Lodrö Rinpoche, a Kagyü teacher living in the Bay Area. Within a few days of their arrival, the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin passed into parinirvana.

I happened to be alone with the Regent in his hospital room moments before the oxygen he was receiving through the respirator burned a hole in his lung and his heart stopped. In those moments I perceived a vivid luminosity that I recognized as the lineage mind and I felt that he had achieved his life's aspiration. His body was ceremonially prepared and dressed by his Kusung, then carried to the San Francisco Dharmadhatu where he remained seated in samadhi on the vajra throne for three days. Lama Lodrö brought his

own students in to practice in the presence of the Vajra Regent in Samadhi, and he instructed Mr. Sweeney in how to determine the signs of samadhi as well as the proper form for requesting the guru to come out of samadhi. The fire puja and cremation ceremonies were conducted soon after at Rocky Mountain Dharma Center, presided over by the Sawang, Ösel Mukpo. Those who attended will remember the vivid rainbow that appeared over the valley toward the end of the ceremony.

Although there were many good signs surrounding the Vajra Regent's passing, the community had not the time to fully understand the significance of the difficult journey of the past few years. There were many unresolved questions and unreconciled feelings. As conflicted as some in the sangha felt over the Vajra Regent's leadership, it was still a profound shock to lose him and so soon after the loss of Trungpa Rinpoche.

Not long after the Regent's parinirvana, the succession arrangement agreed upon while the Regent was still alive met with renewed resistance by some members of the Vajradhatu and Shambhala hierarchy. More missions and petitions were sent to His Holiness Khyentse Rinpoche, who patiently and kindly continued to work with the situation. He suggested numerous avenues to harmony that would include all the students and help us resolve our inner turmoil and outer conflicts but these efforts did not reach fruition. Then, in August of 1991, one year after the passing of the Vajra Regent, His Holiness wrote me a personal letter - replying to one I had written him expressing my views and concerns over the future of the Vidyadhara's two lineages - in which he expressed his sympathy to me and regret about the inability of sangha members to come to harmony. He also wrote that while it was true that the Vidyadhara had established two lineages and lineage holders, in his judgment there should not be a seat for the Vajra Regent's lineage successor instituted within Vajradhatu. In so judging, he explained that he was trying to protect the Sawang - who was at that time a young and inexperienced leader who would carry the responsibility for the organization - from further conflict and factionalism. Trimê Lhawang Patrick Sweeney, the Vajra Regent's dharma heir, received a letter from His Holiness to similar effect.

I was profoundly saddened by the failure of the sangha to reconcile. I felt certain that if the hierarchy of Shambhala and Trimê Lhawang could have approached His Holiness together, with a harmonious and united vision of Trungpa Rinpoche's two lineages working in concert to protect and expand the vajrayana Buddhist teachings and Shambhala vision, His Holiness would have been very pleased with this.

His Holiness Khyentse Rinpoche wanted to retire from his "mediator" role at that point and requested His Eminence, Jamgön Kontrul Rinpoche - one of the four Kagyü princes who was familiar with our sangha and who had been the last high lama to see the Vajra Regent alive - to continue to be available to the Vidyadhara's students and to help and advise them. Trimê Lhawang met His Eminence in India and was encouraged to go before the Sawang and the new board of directors and try once more to find common ground; which he did, to no avail. Then, in another tragic occurrence, Jamgön Kontrul Rinpoche died in a car accident in India—an incalculable loss to the entire Kagyü family.

The schism that occurred began to be concretized in Vajradhatu policy at that point. Dharma centers around the world were directed to remove the Vajra Regent's picture from above their shrines, and as a matter of organizational policy, not to observe his passing as a *parinirvana*. It was noticed that when books by the Vidyadhara came up for re-printing, previous biographical notes referring to the existence of his Vajra Regent were deleted. The Regent's teachings and commentaries faded from the curriculum. We began to see what appeared to be revisions of history, and of Trungpa Rinpoche's vision of the two lineages: Buddhist and Shambhala, which he had established during his lifetime.

Notwithstanding these differences in view, periodic attempts continued to be made by the disciples of the Vidyadhara with faith in the Vajra Regent and his lineage successor to heal the schism in the community. Overtures were also made at one time from the Shambhala side to Trimê Lhawang Patrick Sweeney on behalf of the now Sakyong, Mipham Rinpoche, inviting him to accept the position of acharya (the most senior teachers group within Shambhala International), with the understanding that he would not be regarded as a lineage holder nor authorized to perform abhisheka in the future. As this would not constitute a fulfillment of his samaya with his root guru and the lineage, Mr. Sweeney felt he could not accept this path.

Blessed with the encouragement and teachings of Venerable Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtsö Rinpoche, and the Seventh Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, the "Ojai" community continued their practice and devotion, studied together with Trimê Lhawang Patrick Sweeney and those gurus, established a retreat center and a town center, created the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin Library and Archives and built a Stupa of Enlightenment to house the Vajra Regent's relics, which was consecrated by the Venerable Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche in 1993. With Thrangu Rinpoche's blessings, Mr. Sweeney, myself, and a number of the students remaining in California, established Satdharma—a religious non-profit organization—as the seat for the Buddhist lineage inheritance from Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, through the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin to his American dharma heir, Trimê Lhawang Patrick Sweeney.

While the members of Satdharma continued to aspire toward the reinstatement of the Vidyadhara's Kaygü Buddhist lineage in the West within the Shambhala International organization and the harmony so wished for by His Holiness Dilgo Khyenste Rinpoche, hopes for such a reconciliation had waned significantly. Recognizing that there were these dormant aspirations, however, the Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtsö, surprisingly, took it upon himself to push for a rapprochement between the Satdharma and Shambhala organizations. In the summer of 2004 he requested Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche to come to the retreat center called Pullahari, to spend time with Mr. Sweeney and himself, practicing and talking, which he did. The Sakyong and Richard Reoch, President of Shambhala and Chair of the Sakyong's Council, then came to Ojai, California, to meet further with Mr. Sweeney and me. As part of our discussions then, it was mutually understood and agreed, that in stating his belief in 1991 that a dharma heir to the Vidyadhara's lineage in the West through the Vajra Regent should not be instituted in then Vajradhatu, His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche was making a judgment call

in the service of conflict resolution and not a final ‘verdict’ on the inherent legitimacy of that particular lineage stream.

The following winter, Mr. Sweeney met with Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche in Halifax to explore forging a formal agreement. The Sakyong said, “It’s time”; and the result of the conferences that they entered into was the *Letter of Agreement*. The final language of the letter was ratified on May 29, 2005, and Shambhala International President, Richard Reoch read the letter aloud; in the presence of the Sakyong, Mr. Sweeney, myself and the sangha assembled in the shrine room in Ojai, at Satdharma headquarters. In the agreement, the Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and Trimê Lhawang Patrick Sweeney mutually recognized each other’s respective positions of lineage authority and pledged to work cooperatively. Another key provision of the agreement was to engage—with the help of select sangha elders—in a communication and reconciliation process in order to resolve any lingering interpersonal conflicts and questions regarding the Vajra Regent’s legacy and the events of the last years of his life. The Sakyong and President Reoch committed to posting the *Letter of Agreement* on the Shambhala News Service within the month and a sangha wide celebration of the rapprochement was slated to take place during the Rigden Abhisheka at Shambhala Mountain Center that summer.

While the Sakyong was in Ojai, on the eve of the signing of the agreement, it was revealed that significant obstacles to reconciliation still existed; in that the Vidyadhara’s wife, Lady Diana Mukpo, was not inclined to support it. Mr. Sweeney offered a postponement to the Sakyong, in order to take the time necessary to develop sufficient support; but the Sakyong decided to go ahead with it then. After the signing ceremony, the Sakyong attended a celebration with the Satdharma sangha and departed the following day. As it turned out, the *Letter of Agreement* was never posted on the Shambhala News Service as pledged. Instead, a letter from Lady Diana Mukpo was posted - allegedly unauthorized by Shambhala International- denouncing the *Letter of Agreement*, the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin and Trimê Lhawang Patrick Sweeney’s legitimacy as a lineage holder. Neither the Sakyong, nor President Reoch took any action at that time to publicly clarify Shambhala International’s position with respect to Lady Diana’s statement or the *Letter of Agreement*. Nevertheless, Mr. Sweeney and I, with a delegation of students from Satdharma, went ahead with the planned participation in the Rigden abhisheka that August. We did so with some hope that through the auspicious circumstance of all of the Shambhala and Satdharma leadership being together in one place, the remaining barriers to a shared vision could be dissolved. This was not to happen at that occasion; but still, there was one opportunity of general rapprochement that arose while at Shambhala Mountain Center—a formal “Meet and Greet” event between a couple of hundred of the abhisheka participants, Mr. Sweeney, and me. It was a wonderful occasion of sharing, listening, and speaking genuinely.

Because of the Vidyadhara, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche’s great love for his Western students, he repeatedly invited us to see ourselves as belonging to his Mukpo family. “You are all Mukpos”, he often said. He also taught that hierarchical relationships in the Shambhala tradition of enlightened society are based on affection. In other words, loyalty and devotion are mutual bonds between teachers and students, or monarchs and subjects

as the case may be. In all our time with the Vidyadhara, I always felt very proud and fond of my vajra brothers and sisters; especially those gentlemen and ladies in leadership positions who contributed so much to the realization of the Vidyadhara's vision and teaching activities. I've noticed there's a tendency to think that the way things end up is the way they were "meant to be". From my perspective, the sicknesses, untimely deaths, conflicts and schism of our community represent a powerful obstacle and a great family tragedy that I hope will be overcome in time.

When asked near the end of his life how he thought about the vision of Shambhala, the Vajra Regent simply said, "It is always in my heart". In emulating his example, I also hold to that aspiration. That being said however, as fulfillment of my vows to my teachers, I consider it to be a personal duty to continue to work with the leadership of Shambhala International for an appropriate resolution of the spiritual obstacles and organizational issues pertaining to my late husband, my root guru's dharma heir, Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin and his legacy.

As I reflect upon the heart teachings of the father guru and the forbearers of our lineage, I realize my profound good fortune. I see the tradition of lineage, as practiced through the ages by our predecessors, as what brought to us the incomparable vajra master, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and his brilliant regent, Ösel Tendzin. Much as it is with love and trust, genuine devotion arises naturally and cannot be imposed or legislated - for or against. Together with the cultivation of bodhicitta, surrender of ego to the wisdom command of an authentic guru is the ultimate path to liberation. If I may say so, this was the core of the Vajra Regent's understanding and the essence of his life's example.

Having been requested many times to share my experience and views with regard to the topic of the Vidyadhara's lineages and that of his regent and dharma heir Ösel Tendzin; and in my capacity as the wife of Ösel Tendzin, a close disciple of the Vidyadhara, and as a founding member of Satdharma, I wrote this personal account.

Yours in Friendship,

Lady Lila Rich