

SHAMBHALA CONGRESS
February 16, 2005

I want to thank the Kyabje Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche for inviting me to come to the Shambhala Congress. I also want to thank Lady Diana Mukpo, President Richard Reoch, Dr. Mitchell Levy and all the other members of the Shambhala community for giving me this opportunity to talk with you all. I am extremely happy to be here and to be able to make this presentation.

I am here serving as a representative of the people of Surmang, including the 12th Trungpa, Chokyi Senge Rinpoche, Damcho Tenphel Rinpoche, Karma Senge Rinpoche, Rolpe Dorje Rinpoche, Aten Rinpoche and others.

SURMANG HISTORY

For the past six hundred years, Surmang has been home to the Surmang Kagyu including the Trungpa tulkus. As you know, Surmang and all of Tibet went through radical changes starting in the 1950s.

At the time when I was a young child, the monasteries at Surmang were destroyed including Surmang Namgyal Tse, Dudtse Til and the Kyere monasteries. All of the buildings were in ruins and the monks and tulkus were either dead or had gone away. The same was true for all of the other monasteries, such as Shechen, Damkhar and Thrangu. For those of us remaining behind, we had no knowledge whether the teachers who had left had reached a safe destination or whether they were alive or dead. At that time, my family did not know if Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche had been able to escape from the Chinese.

But, during this time, our lineage stayed alive. We had to practice in secret since the Chinese did not allow us to practice Buddhism. In English, you have a phrase, “going underground” to describe going into hiding. That is pretty much what we had to do. Some of the teachers who survived went on retreat in caves for many years, not simply to hide but to practice meditation. This was the case with my guru, Maha siddha Karma Norbu Rinpoche. He stayed in retreat in a cave for more than twenty years hiding from the Chinese. Only a few people knew where he was.

Even though Surmang was not his home monastery, Maha siddha Karma Norbu Rinpoche had been a main student of the tenth Trungpa Rinpoche, and had stayed in retreat at Dorje Khyung Dzong for 8 years. He also exchanged teachings with Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, the eleventh Trungpa. He held all the transmissions of the Surmang lineage. In 1980 he came out from his retreat cave and then stayed in a small retreat center nearby the cave for the remainder of his life. At that time many of the monks, nuns and lay practitioners from all of Tibet, including Surmang, went to study with Maha siddha Karma Norbu Rinpoche. He gave us all the different abhisekas of the hearing lineage of Surmang; the Rinchen Terdzo, pointing out instructions and so forth.

Thus he helped tremendously to revive the tradition at Surmang. Then some of the old monks who were still alive, monks who had been at Surmang at the time of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, came back. Slowly, slowly, the rebuilding and revival of Surmang began.

When Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche left Tibet, he left behind his family: his mother, his brother, and his two sisters. So that they would be safe, they stayed near Kyere monastery. Kyere monastery is part of the Surmang group of monasteries and is in a remote area a little further south than Surmang Dutsi Til. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's brother, Damchö Tenphel Rinpoche, is the abbot of Kyere. Now, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's brother and sisters have a number of children: the cousins of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, including Karma Senge Rinpoche.

After 1980, the people of Surmang including the family of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche were able to start practicing Buddhism openly once again.

Around that time, we also heard from people who came from Nepal and India that Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche had come to the West and had started many dharma centers there to benefit countless sentient beings. We also eventually received several letters from him. Truly, the Vidyadhara, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche was a very special teacher, a great Mahasiddha. We at Surmang were all tremendously proud of him that he was able to benefit so many beings around the world.

THE TRUNGPA TULKUS

There are many tulkus in Tibet, but very few have been so exceptional as the Trungpa tulkus. The first Trungpa, Kunga Gyaltzen, the founder of Surmang Dutsi til, received the Chakrasamvara dance directly from Chakrasamvara and Vajrayogini. The great fourth Trungpa, Kunga Namgyal, established the Surmang Chöd practice in addition to special teachings on Mahamudra called the Kunam Chagchen. The tenth Trungpa taught the hearing lineage teachings prominently and spread these teachings in Khams beyond the area of Surmang. He was a great practitioner and scholar and was comparable to Jamgon Kongtrul.

The Vidyadhara, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche was one of the primary teachers to transmit the Tibetan Buddhist teachings to the West and he established the Shambhala teachings in this area of the world. The Vidyadhara, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche is one of the greatest teachers of our time. To the people of Surmang, the Vidyadhara, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche is more special than any other teacher. Even people in Surmang who have never met the Vidyadhara feel that he is their root guru. I feel the same way. I am also certain that all the Shambhala community members feel the same way.

Even though the Vidyadhara, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche passed away in 1987, he has never forgotten us. His teachings remain vibrant and permeate countless beings.

These are just some of the many accomplishments of the Trungpa lineage, the lineage that has been transmitted to us at Surmang and to you at Shambhala International.

We are one family.

SAKYONG MIPHAM RINPOCHE

We have lost Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche but we are so fortunate to have Kyabje Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche providing guidance and care.

Shambhala and Surmang are one family and one lineage. Kyabje Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche is now the main lineage holder for both Shambhala and Surmang Dutsi til. This was entirely decided by the Vidyadhara, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche.

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche was given, as a young man, the title of Sawang by his father. If you look at the literal meaning of the words Sakyong and Sawang, Sakyong means protector of the earth and Sawang means lord of the earth. At that time, the Vidyadhara avoided creating confusion by choosing to use the title Sawang as opposed to Sakyong. In Tibetan, the title, Sawang, has the same meaning as the title Sakyong, and both mean king. This is a clear statement that the Vidyadhara, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, from that time forward, intended the Sawang, now the Sakyong, to be his dharma heir. We received a letter from the Vidyadhara at Surmang stating that he had given his older son the title Sawang. Since then, the people at Surmang realized that the Sawang was the future holder of the Vidyadhara's seat in both the Surmang and Shambhala traditions.

When the Kyabje Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche came to visit us in Surmang Dutsi til, the monastic and lay people of Surmang came together and requested him to take his seat as the head of Surmang Dutsi Til, the ancient capital of the Surmang lineage and the Trungpa tulkus. On behalf of all of us at Surmang, including the twelfth Trungpa Rinpoche and the other tulkus, I would like to say that we are very grateful that the Sakyong has accepted this responsibility.

TRUNGPA XII RINPOCHE

Perhaps you would like to hear how Chökyi Senge, the twelfth Trungpa tulku, is progressing in his studies. As you know, he was born in the Derge area of Khams in 1989, so he will be 16 this year. Tai Situ Rinpoche recognized him at an early age as the twelfth Trungpa. He has spent part of his time studying at Palpung monastery, which is Tai Situ Rinpoche's home monastery in Tibet, as well as at Surmang Dutsi Til. Last fall, Trungpa Rinpoche spent four months receiving the Rinchen Terdzo cycle of teachings from Pewar Rinpoche at Dzongsar monastery. Trungpa Rinpoche enjoys meeting visitors from Shambhala International when they come to Surmang. He is in good health. I've posted a picture I took several months ago of him and Aten Rinpoche.

The Konchok Foundation has been instrumental in providing Trungpa Rinpoche the necessary support to continue his Buddhist studies.

VISITING SURMANG

I'm grateful to have the opportunity to come from Surmang to meet with you. I have waited a long time to be able to come here. I also feel that Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche was waiting. The first day I came to the Shambhala Mountain Center in 1999, I had a dream. I dreamt I was climbing a high mountain like one of the mountains at the Shambhala Mountain Center. Finally, at the top of the mountain I saw someone standing there in front of a tent. It was the Vidyadhara, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche wearing a long yellow chuba. He said why did you take so long. I have been waiting for you for a long time. You are late.

I know I am late, but I don't think I'm too late.

In 2001 the Kyabje Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche visited Surmang with his mother and other Shambhala community members. The people of Surmang were so happy. It was like meeting the Vidyadhara himself! Then in 2002 Lady Diana Mukpo, Kongtrul Rinpoche, Khamnyon Rinpoche, Dr. Mitchell Levy and other Mukpo family members visited Surmang. In 2003 Damcho Tenphel Rinpoche and Karma Senge Rinpoche came to visit the Shambhala centers in the US and in Canada. In 2004, Kyabje Rinpoche visited Surmang once again and we started building the shedra in Surmang. Now I am here – so therefore perhaps it's not too late.

At this point, not so many of us from Surmang have come to the West. Hopefully, more teachers from Surmang will be able to visit and impart the teachings of the Surmang tradition including the Chakrasamvara dance, the hearing lineage teachings and others. Surmang Dutsi til is not the only monastery in Surmang. There are more than ten Surmang monasteries. Surmang Namgyaltse is the first monastery of Surmang. The abbot of Surmang Namgyaltse is Kyabje Garwang Rinpoche. He rebuilt Surmang Namgyaltse and he also built a large and beautiful monastery in Sikkim. He is a very important tulku for the Surmang Kagyus; and well educated. He is very close with Kyabje Sakyong Rinpoche and came to the USA in 2001 for the Consecration of the Great Stupa of Dharmakaya. In the future, it would be good if the Shambhala community were able to invite him to visit and impart his blessings and teachings. I also hope that Kyabje Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche will be able to visit Surmang again and again and impart his blessings as well as the teachings of the Shambhala tradition.

Meanwhile, we would like to invite every one of you to visit us in Surmang, the home ground of Shambhala. You are very welcome to come and visit us and to practice with us. Perhaps the food is not so good by western standards but it is a good place to practice. The presence of Chakrasamvara and Vajrayogini are very strong. Also we can say there are many dralas, for sure.

I wanted to make a few remarks with regard to the rebuilding occurring at Surmang. In the 1980's we received a letter from the Vidyadhara expressing the wish to rebuild the monastery at Dudtisi Til and that he wanted to return to Tibet to visit the people at Surmang. I read this letter myself. In the letter the Vidyadhara said that he wished to return to Surmang very soon and that he wanted to take the responsibility of rebuilding Dudtisi Til. He wrote to us saying that we should not worry about rebuilding Dudtisi Til since he would take care of this. Unfortunately, the Vidyadhara left us in 1987 and was unable to fulfill this wish. However, through the kindness of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and the Konchok Foundation, and so many of you in the Shambhala community and elsewhere, we have been able to begin fulfilling this wish of the Vidyadhara, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. I want to thank you so much for helping in this manner. We are very happy to have started the construction of the shedra, which will be a school available to both the monastic community and the lay community of Surmang. When Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche came to Surmang in September, 255 people took refuge establishing their commitment to practice and study the dharma. This is in addition to the many monks who are already at Dutsi Til. So we have many people who would like to study. The new shedra will provide the necessary housing and classroom space for the students and monks to study the dharma as well as English, Chinese, mathematics and other subjects. Please help Konchok foundation build the shedra quickly – there is a need to establish it soon before the students get too old.

Thank you very much.