



Editorial: The Fiction of Independence

WE'VE BEEN MAKING MUCH recently about the new independent status of the *Shambhala Sun*. First, our September, 2007 editorial described how being legally independent will strengthen our ability to support the growth of genuine dharma. More recently, you've probably noticed the full-page ads for our new development projects, the Online Gallery of dharma art prints and the first annual Online Auction.

The basic story is that after all our years as part of the Shambhala International Buddhist community, we are now legally separate and on our own. Now we're the Shambhala Sun Foundation: the independent, nonprofit publishers of the *Shambhala Sun*.

This is a very important step for us. We serve a growing and diverse community of people, like you, whose lives are being enriched by the Buddhist teachings on meditation, compassion, and the nature of reality. We're proud that our magazine creates the ground for a conversation that is shaping how the dharma is mixing with our culture and helping people. We've long known that the dharma is bigger than any one tradition, and so it was a natural step for us to become legally independent. There it is again. Independent.

Well, I'm writing this editorial to tell you that it's not true. This independence thing is a big fiction.

Maybe not entirely. It is true that we are no longer legally joined to any particular Buddhist community. That won't change how we do things, because our publishing decisions have never been biased toward any one group. But we can move forward on many fronts now without that question hanging in the air, including plans to invite practitioners from different traditions to join us in guiding the Shambhala Sun Foundation into the future.

After all, the *Shambhala Sun* is part of the community it serves. That's what makes all this talk about independence a fiction, in several important ways. In general, it's getting harder to see our world as anything other than interconnected; we are clearly dependent on each other. More particularly, *Shambhala Sun* senior staff are all long-time practitioners, and deep immersion in the dharma through one tradition brings an intimate interconnection with other traditions and

lineages. All dharmas agree at an important point, and we will always publish from that perspective.

In turn, we rely on the exertion and wisdom of all those who support our magazine—writers and artists, advertisers and friends, and each of you who buys the *Shambhala Sun*. Whether it's climate change, political repression in Burma, or the mortgage crisis at home, the experience of interconnectedness undermines any claim to independence—ours, yours, or anyone's.

This interconnectedness is also a hallmark of our new development work. It is why we do it at all. We have no independent wealth, large donors, or outside investment. We are sustained by the support this diverse community gives us, which is a key reason why we've always been a sustainable publishing business. The focus of our new development efforts is to raise seed money to expand our publishing activities in order to grow stronger financially. In the end these new activities will just be more ways for us to serve the community and bring the dharma into our reader's lives. The Gallery and the Auction are examples; we are grateful to all who have made these ventures possible, and we hope these projects will bring more awareness and benefit to all who have helped us with them.

So in important ways we're all in this same boat, and that makes the claim to independence a little feeble. It never feels independent, and that's because we aren't independent—none of us is, really. We rely on each other in many ways, and the world of dharma is enriched by how we all contribute. Helping to create institutions, and indeed a world, that can support the flourishing of dharma for future generations in the midst of such a materialistic time takes a lot of work, and it's a good thing that there are a lot of us doing it. That's why they call it sangha.

So there's something in the message of independence that's missing the point. But it doesn't require a huge adjustment, just a little change in view, as usual something very simple. Like a syllable. The Shambhala Sun Foundation: the interdependent nonprofit publisher of the *Shambhala Sun*. Now that's what we're talking about.

—JAMES GIMIAN, PUBLISHER