Sudden Glimpse: the Appearance of Awakened Mind in Everyday Life

TALK I Given by Ösel Tendzin N.Y. Dharmadhatu, March 17, 1978

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I would like to welcome everyone to this Intensive Training Session called "Sudden Glimpse" -- which we just had. And our subject is somewhat lofty: the appearance of awakened mind in everyday life. We have three lofty parts to that lofty subject. The first is glimpse; and the second is awakened mind; and the third, everyday life. So, in terms of our study and practice for the next three days, those are the topics which we will be discussing and how they relate to each other.

But before we begin, I would like to issue a general warning to everybody about this topic, which has a somewhat seductive title and juicy, in the sense that sudden glimpse does not mean anything particularly extraordinary. A sudden glimpse simply means that it happens so fast that we have simply a memory of such an experience. So that those of us here tonight -- whether experienced practitioners, we call ourselves experienced practitioners or we call ourselves novice or we don't call ourselves anything at all -- no matter what state of mind we approach the subject, we should know that what we are doing here is not trying to uncork the bottle, so to speak. Make it pop. Make it fizz, so that we can say that we really had a good time. That's not particularly our reason for being here.

On the other hand, the title is not simply some kind of swiss cheese for the rats. It has something to do with our state of being, something fundamental to do with our state of being; so there is no con job going on. So that we can actually appreciate the fact that no con job is going on, perhaps we could play back a little bit of experience in terms of our personal life, our search for some kind of awakening. No doubt, most people here - whether they call themselves buddhists or not is not particularly the point, doesn't matter - most people here have some kind of question, some kind of irritation going on, some kind of search. All of those words are loaded, absolutely loaded, loaded with significance from the point of view of cultural bias. We have had such a hard time with cultural bias. We have had such a hard time sorting out what is worthwhile about being alive, what is actually worthwhile about being alive. Why so? Simply because we have accumulated a storehouse of memory, which is neither good nor bad, but simply is stored up and also is at our beck and call any time we experience anything at all. So in other words, what I am saying is whatever we experience we have a memory to go along with it.

To come to the teaching of the Buddha is at once energizing and depressing, because if we take even the slightest time to check out our title of this session, we feel exhilarated and depressed. Exhilarated because: sudden glimpse - promise we can do it quickly; everyday life - promise - nothing unusual, just simple bread and butter: appearance - oops, now we have a problem. Appearance, what appears to be so, everybody here has tried something or other, tried

to make a success, tried to make a go of it, and wound up in this loft tonight with some sense of arrogance at having gotten here at all, and some sense of poverty that we're in this part of town,

some sense of hope that maybe this time we'll hear the thing that we want to hear, and some sense of skepticism that here goes another one. Well, we got it all wrapped up. Each one of us individually has the answer. Put it together and it is complete chaos. Add a shrine and a speaker and we have super chaos. If we're looking for something, if we're trying to find out what is real in our life, then where are we looking, where are we looking for it? Generally speaking, no matter how sophisticated we are, we miss the basic point, miss the point that it is nowhere else but in our life as it is. Schlepper or fantastic siddha, where is this thing, we're looking for, this awakened state of mind, this answer to our question?

It is our unfortunate karma and our fortunate karma, because the two things go hand in hand, to be born in this particular culture at this time where everything is like a waterfall, incessantly pouring out verbiage. Last night, I arrived in New York, and I did live here for five years. That was a while ago. And recently I've been living in Colorado, which is different from New York. And we switched on the TV, which had, it seemed to me, at least fifteen or twenty channels. In Colorado they have four. And every channel we turned, somebody was talking. It is our misfortune to be born in an age where everybody is talking and nobody knows what they're talking about. It is also our good fortune because there is a possibility of a sudden glimpse. Because of that, because of the proliferation of chaos there is a possibility that some small gap might exist in our experience. Because everything revs up so much, to such a speed that it breaks down at a certain point. Our subject is not to figure out what point that breaks down at; and that's what you're thinking, which undoubtedly you're thinking. Our subject is to realize that when mental activity gets to the point of such tremendous speed, there is always a gap, a malfunction, to use the modern term. There is always a malfunction. And that malfunction is what all of us consider to be a negative experience. That's how we've been taught to live, how we've been taught to think, experience. That when something malfunctions, then we're in dire straits, we're in great danger of losing our solidity, our identity, our hold on life. And what would happen if we did? The whole world and universe would be in chaos. What if channel thirteen turned out to be channel twelve, and all the way down the line? What would happen to us? This is what we think. This is how we think. It's very funny, but not so funny. This is how we think. When some small shift happens in our conscious experience, at that point we clutch, grab, hold on to something very near, very close, very dear. A sudden glimpse is simply a malfunction of our neurosis, the malfunction of our habitual pattern of thinking, feeling, perceiving, conceptualizing. A sudden glimpse has nothing to do with binoculars or microscope. That's what we would love to believe. That's what a sudden glimpse is, that we have the corner on the sudden glimpse, suddenly we know. A sudden glimpse simply means that at one point in our experience we have no answer to our question, absolutely none.

Now, what is it that brings us together in a feeling of compassion? What is it that brings us together in a feeling of some sort of relatedness, some sort of warmth that we actually are here together? What is it that brings us together? And that, from a general point of view, is called intelligence. Well, we certainly could say that: "Aw sure how about insanity instead of intelligence, that's what brings us together, because we're all so messed up, fucked up, that that's why we're here together. We even paid money to be stupid." Not quite. I venture to say that nobody pays money here to be stupid. Everybody has some design. Everybody has some sense of

achieving something or other. What brings us together as intelligence is simply the irritation of a question and answer rubbing against each other.

Now my point in giving this talk this evening is trying to set some sort of practical ground for all of us to continue in the next two days. A lot of people here have never heard very much about buddhadharma or the teaching of awakened mind. A lot of people here have heard so much that it sounds like old hat. Some people are in the middle. It doesn't matter what stage you think you're at particularly, tonight. What does matter is that we all appreciate the ground that we are sitting on. Otherwise, this particular ITS, Intensive Training Session, whatever you want to call it, is a complete waste of time. We have made a bad job from the start. What we should consider, as intelligent human beings, is that in order to step, you must have something to step on. We're not talking so much, at this point, about where you step from because that's how we got here. We don't know where we're stepping from. But basically how we should start out is what we step on. What is our ground? What is our basis for being here at all? Why should we be here?

We have three principles involved: sudden glimpse, awakened mind, everyday life. And the first one we are working on is sudden glimpse. Sudden glimpse, very practically speaking, means when you can't figure out. Huh. A lot of things come up. Can't figure out what, can't figure out when, how, past, present, future, concept, explanation, sense of being insulted, sense of being confirmed. When you can't figure out anything at all, that is called a sudden glimpse. How does that happen practically to all of us? This particular time together should not be spent simply in talking or thinking. What we have to do together in these three days is use intellect and intuition together. We all have a feeling of what's being taught. At the same time we all have a thought about it or thinking about it. The two generally are at odds with each other. Our process of being together is working the two together so that we realize the indivisibility of the two, that thinking and feeling are not separate. Sudden glimpse means you cannot figure out at all. In other words, past references don't apply, future projections don't apply. The only thing experientially we could say is that there's some sort of irritation, dissatisfaction. But at the same time we could say that the dissatisfaction is very exciting. We feel good about it. We feel slightly energized. We would like to make a move - in the right direction - in the right direction? Sudden glimpse means that there is something intelligent happening constantly which we in our condition have been prone to think of as negative experience. We have been prone to think that such not knowing is absolutely what we should get rid of. But our being together here tonight is simply that and nothing else, because nobody has any idea whatsoever why we're here. No matter whose been studying for ten years, five years, three years, three minutes, at this very moment, we're completely stuck in this, which could be delightful and horrifying at the same time. It could be delightful because here's a "I believe what this gentleman is talking about", or, on the other hand, "this bullshit artist is taking up my time." Either way, it's the same thing. We're stuck in the moment, absolutely frozen in the moment, and it has nothing to do with the spell-binding qualities of the speaker who could care less, frankly. And it has nothing to do with the perceptive qualities of the audience who also could care less. We took a big chance and we come together and we hope that something is going to happen. This is called sudden glimpse; not knowing in the moment.

Now in our thing together, three days thing, we have two aspects: one is intellectual, the other is intuitive, in other words, practical and theoretical. We can't do one without the other. We must do both together. This is absolutely certain and this is the teaching that I, myself, have been

part of. So this is also the teaching which I am basically able to transmit. We have to understand why and we also have to feel what. What a vast sea of great intuition and intellect here! I wonder how many experts we have, how many experts on their lives? I venture to say each one of us is a complete expert on our lives. At the same time, I venture to say that we have slightly established a expert wall around us which protects our expertise. When we come together in a situation like this, a sudden glimpse means that that wall is vulnerable. It's possible that somebody could penetrate that wall. And in penetrating that wall, we have no idea who's going to be there to defend it. Jolly good show. This is what we have to work on. Our ground is vulnerability, which is sudden glimpse. Our ground as vulnerability is what, we might say, is intelligence, real intelligence, not trumped up, puffed up, footnoted intelligence. We would say real intelligence because it has no second guess, it has no references. Our world is full of footnotes. We say I'm right because: A, B, C, D, everybody said so. The past said so. It happened at Waterloo. It happened in ancient Greece. It happened in ancient China. It happened in old New York. Well that's one thing. Or, it was written about by Ray Bradbury. The greatest scientists have confirmed my vision. The greatest architects have produced my vision. I must be right. I must be right. I must be right. I must be right. I am right here in a loft on Park Avenue which recently been painted. And I have a sudden glimpse of how things actually are: Pipes and Chinese lanterns and good luck, maybe. So we have bitter and sweet at the same time. We have no idea, and yet we have some idea. This is our ground, how we can actually go further. If it is too volatile for you, then I only can say stick with it. If it is too certain for you, I only can say wake up. You've been listening to too many stories. Intelligence has something to do with a question. It has something very intrinsically to do with irritation. It has something to do with hope and fear. It is sudden and it is everyday. Therefore, together, totally, it is awakened.

If you have any questions, we could have a discussion. Let's have the microphone. All right, here we go.

Question: You said that sudden glimpse is when we have no answer at all to our question. It seems to me that perhaps - let me ask you this. Is it not maybe the possibility for a sudden glimpse when we have no answer to our question, rather than the coming to that stage where there is no answer doesn't seem necessarily to be a glimpse? But it could be the occasion for a sudden glimpse.

Vajra Regent: Well, I think the two go very close together. But I do think that the occasion of no answer is the occasion of the birth of possibility. I think the other one must come first.

Q: The other one? What other one?

VR: Being no answer, before this possibility.

Q: Yes, no answer then a certain –

VR: possibility of answer.

Q: Not if there's no answer.

VR: Yeah, absolutely. O: If there's no answer, there's no answer. VR: If there's no answer, then possibility arises. Q: Not if there's no answer. VR: If there's no answer, Q: No answer. VR: No answer, whatsoever – Q: That's right-VR: then possibility arises. Q: For an answer? VR: No answer, absolutely none. Then there's possibility. Q: For a sudden glimpse. VR: No, for an answer. Sudden glimpse is no answer. Then possibility arises. Q: So what you're saying is; it's no answer, sudden glimpse, possibility of an answer? VR: No. Q: No? VR: What I am saying is: no answer is sudden glimpse. From that possibility arises. Well, that's what I'm asking though, because I feel frequently in a state of no answer, but Q: not necessarily on the receiving end of a sudden glimpse. Or (laughter) -VR: A receiving end means that there's possibility already has arisen. Q: Yes, and sometimes I feel – VR: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Before you say yes, do you get what I said? Q: I guess I didn't. I –

VR:

Let's try again.

Q: All right.

VR: No answer - sudden glimpse. Right?

Q: Well, that's, - I'm questioning that.

VR: Yeah. And what did you say?

Q: Well that no answer sometimes can, there can be a sudden glimpse and sometimes there is simply no answer and not a sudden glimpse, just no answer.

VR: But I'm saying is sudden glimpse is no answer. And that the possibility –

Q: Yeah

VR: - sense of possibility arising is the result of sudden glimpse.

Q: You said the sudden glimpse is no answer, but I'm asking is no answer sudden glimpse?

VR: Not exactly.

Q: Yes. That's not -- that's what I want to -

VR: Not exactly.

Q: Now what is the not exactly?

VR: Not exactly is the fact that possibility has already arisen. So you say not exactly, which means possibility. Do you see what I mean?

Q: Yes, which means it could go either way.

VR: Yeah. That's a possibility.

Q: Yeah.

VR: Yeah. You begin to think it could be sudden glimpse, it couldn't be sudden glimpse. Sudden glimpse means sudden glimpse. It has no sense of "you". No answer means no you. I mean we get right down to it. You know what I mean, come on. Come on bub, you, if you begin to think about it, right? You begin to have a memory; then you have already possibilities germinated. Before you had that, you had a gap. You had a space where nothing happened whatsoever, in terms of me and the possibility of me.

Q: So like it takes a certain courage to divest oneself of one's possibility, maybe premature possibilities. Like –

VR: Well, you see, that's the way we generally approach it. I was thinking about that actually, in this particular gathering, whether or not I should present it that way. That it takes a certain courage to divest oneself. But I don't think that's really true dharma.

Q: What's, what's the catch with that?

VR: The catch with that is some sort of apology for being who we are, for really experiencing sudden glimpse.

Q: In what sense is that an apology?

VR: Well, we can say: look, if you practice this buddadharma, sit and meditate, then you can actually get to the sudden glimpse which you missed. (laughter) And what I'm saying is: you didn't miss it; what you did was comment on it. You went on with it, because it was all so startling because it had no answer, no answer. And nobody here hasn't had it, hasn't had that experience. If that were the case, then the whole thing would be complete lie. This stuff that we're talking about, which we practice, meditation, buddhadharma: complete lie. This is our, if I might go on with this speech, this is our lineage. Lineage of the Kagyupas, from Vajradhara to the present day, says that if you can't find enlightenment in your ordinary experience, then it doesn't exist. There's no such thing. If it doesn't exist, then neither does your ordinary experience. Therefore, there is no enlightenment. Since we believe there is ordinary experience; therefore there is enlightenment. So, where do you find it? Where do you look for it? Just what you do: brush your teeth, go to the bathroom, cook your meal, go to the restaurant, pay the bill, sign the check, take a cab, feel depressed about spending the money (laughter). The whole thing, in each one of that simple series there's possibility of sudden glimpse, because between your getting the bill and signing it, you look at it, and before you notice that it's more than you ever thought it would be, there's this point where you don't know anything at all. There's a point where there's just sudden glimpse of being as we are, where the human beings really are beyond bullshit, beyond the accumulated circumstances of our lives. That's what I mean by the difference between potential and sudden glimpse. Are we clicking on this thing?

Q: Yes. Good.

VR: All right.

(inaudible word from audience) Uh-uh. We have to record everybody for the sake of history -- which is a good question later on.

Q: I had one question for myself and a comment in relationship to the other question. The comment was: the relationship between no answer and confusion.

VR: No answer -- confusion.

Q: The relationship in his mind between confusion and –

VR: In whose mind?

Q: The - I don't know his name. VR: The other person? Umm. It seemed to me that – Q: VR: You remember his mind? Q: I don't remember -- I don't know his mind. VR: Oh, I see. Well, it seemed his question – Q: VR: Well, it seemed? - and what it is -Q: Q: an – VR: Well, let's see what it seemed. What it seemed - the question he asked at one time in clarification was: sometimes he felt O: he experienced no mind, and yet, no sudden glimpse. VR: No mind? Q: and yet, no sudden gl -VR: No mind? (undecipherable for a few seconds: questioner and Regent talking simultaneously) Q: Oh, not no mind VR: Oh-ohohohoh! Q: I meant – VR: Woa-woa-woah. I get my terminology confused. Q: VR: Oh. Well? What was that? No mind is a Zen – Q:

VR: Well, what was that no mind?

Q: No mind is no answer.

VR: No answer is no mind.

Q: Yes.

VR: OK. That experience of no answer, you're saying, what he said, was -

Q: No, what I, my interpretation –

VR: Of?

O: Of what he said –

VR: About?

Q: what his confu, what his –

VR: No-no-no. Wait a minute.

Q: What his question –

VR: Wait, let's -- It's not very complicated, ladies and gentlemen. What I would like to know is your interpretation of his question.

Q: Okay.

VR: I - Okay?

Q: Sure

VR: Yeah, that's it.

Q: He feels that - this is my interpretation - he feels (laughter) that he, when you talk about answer, he feels he experiences no answer and yet doesn't have sudden glimpse. And it seems to me that the confusion lies in the relationship between no answer and confusion.

VR: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

Q: There's no answer that relates the possibility –

VR: That's right. We're talking about the same thing. We're talking, about the same thing. What I'm saying is - is that you all think that you experience no answer, but what you experienced was potentiality, not no answer.

Q: When you experience no answer, you experience potentiality.

VR: Who experiences no answer?

Q: Who experiences potentiality?

VR: You. Different. (laughter)

Q: Can I move on to my question?

VR: I hope so.

Q: Okay. My question –

VR: Do you understand my answer?

Q: Repeat your answer.

VR: I said, I said that the difference between sudden glimpse and potentiality is that in sudden glimpse there's no one to experience it; in potentiality, there's you. Do you understand my answer?

O: Yes.

VR: All right, all right. Let's go on to your question now.

Q: My question (laughter) - -

VR: What are THEY laughing at? That's what we would like to know.

Q: My question –

VR: Yeah -

Q: - is the extension of sudden glimpse as possibility in everyday life.

VR: Good shot, very good. That's what we're talking about here. That's why we come here. Sudden glimpse has no particular allegiance to you or the experience. It just simply is the state of no answer. At the same time, it is itchy. It has experiential quality of itch, irritation. That becomes potentiality when it becomes you. In other words, I don't feel an answer, so what we're talking about is how to work with that situation once we recognize that there is some sort of transition; transition and good shot, transition. Subway door opens, we walk out. We're at 59th Street, how'd we get there? Oh, we came from 34<sup>th</sup> then we're at 59th, didn't we? Door opens, we

walk out. Door closes, we're there, suddenly. Before the door opened, we were thinking about that great weekend we had. It was so good. It was fantastic. Do you remember so-and-so and the party and the music and the drink. Or, do you remember that weekend at dharmadhatu? (laughter) We had such a good sitting practice. I actually related to Richard Haspray. It was great (laughter). They had a wonderful time. Ah. Suddenly the door opened. Schoom, the door opened. (snaps fingers) door opened. (snaps fingers) the thought went away, just like that. So I have to get out. (laughter) 59th Street, duddledelump, 59th Street. How did that 59th Street recognition come about? How did that possibility of being intelligent, knowing that this should get out there, how did that come about? Nobody knows, nobody knows. Sudden glimpse happens in a moment, and in a moment, nobody knows. At the same time, possibilities begin to evolve.

Q: What I would like to know is, after a transition is realized or apprehended –

VR: Uh-huh

Q: - one could also, one goes back. The doors open, you go back.

VR: Right. You go back. Yeah.

Q: And the question for me is: how to maintain the doors opening while going back.

VR: Exactly. And that's why we're here this weekend. And that's called meditation practice. Now, I've been doing my best, as a good soldier, not to hard sell the product (laughter), because I'm a contemporary man (laughter). On the other hand, you tell me, you tell me one thing, one experience that you had in your life that doesn't mean anything, aside from meditation practice (laughter). Now a lot of people are laughing because they did it. And those of you who didn't do it think it is an in-joke. Well, it is an out-joke as well. The point is, is that once you practice this buddhist meditation -buddhist, buddha means awake, awake means sudden glimpse - meditation of awake means that you dwell in sudden glimpse all the time, which is not lemon meringue pie, particularly. It's a question of how to do it, just how to do it. It's very practical. So there we have it. We're finally come around, full circle. That's what we're going to do the next two days, if you have the guts and the intellect. It's not just intuition, it's intellect as well. It's having some sense of why we're here, including a feeling of why we're here. You can't have one throw you the whole way, because if you just have some sort of feeling of sudden glimpse as being the bottom dropping out of your life, then if you meditate, you meditate from the point of view of desperation. If on the other hand, you have simply the notion that obviously this is the only way to be, because the rest are involved with silliness and triviality, then you have the bottom dropping out. Either one doesn't work. At one point you're waiting for the hangman to drop the thing, and the other point, it's dropped and you're waiting for it to come back. So there we have it. In any case, meditation is what we come around to.

Q: My question doesn't have anything to do with intellect.

VR: Are you sure?

Q: I don't know.

VR: Well, let's see.

Q: Well, something that always kind of bugs me at a gatherings like this, I hate to say it here, but there's a certain feeling always of smugness or some kind of arrogance or sort of an in-group type of thing. Now is this a total projection of mine? Is this my imagination?

VR: Absolutely not, (laughter) absolutely not. There's a whole lot of horse-shit in this room.

Q: (laughter) Okay.

VR: Now what're you gonna do about that? Hmm? Are you going to be satisfied that your projection or your intuition has been confirmed? So what! So what. You still come out with no answer. I mean really, you know, you and I, just tell me what you think.

O: What I think?

VR: Yeah, so what. You just got confirmed by me, right?

Q: Yeah.

VR: That there's a lot of bullshit here. Do you feel better?

O: Yeah. I feel better.

VR: How sweet. Now what?

Q: Now I'm gonna go home.

VR: What?

Q: Afterwards. I'm gonna go home.

VR: Now you're gonna go home. Good. I hope there's two pillows, maybe one. When you wake up in the morning, there's sudden glimpse. You begin to become alive and you don't know how you got there.

Q: Thank you.

VR: The gentleman over there.

Q: How come, if you say that we all have this intelligence, I don't feel it?

VR: Well, I think the point there is, is that we always have some memory of what happened beforehand, even in terms of all of us, the questions that we ask come from memory rather than from being right here, rather than from being on the experience of what we're doing right now. In

some sense, we have a mixture of both. We have the question, which is probably memory. At the same time it's instigated by the experience. In other words, sudden glimpse of where we are. So we have two things at once. We don't feel it. We don't feel that sudden glimpse of intelligence. And yet, we're prompted to ask some sort of question. That prompting, that sort of push from somewhere is intelligence we're talking about, is a sudden glimpse becoming potentiality.

Q: But actually we, what we do feel is, what I seem to feel is when I stub my toe (comment from audience: "Can't hear.") I seem to feel when I stub my toe, not when I'm walking gracefully through a crowded street is, when I miss it, that I feel it.

VR: Well, I think that is somewhat sophisticated approach.

Q: Sorry (laughter).

VR: For your toe or me?

Q: For me.

VR: Same thing. That sophisticated approach is, is that we feel we missed it in the best of circumstances. In other words, when we stubbed our toe that was the best of circumstances. Now this is a very important point, ladies and gentlemen, if we want to continue, we always feel like the best of circumstances are the most visible, the most demonstrative. That's when we feel that we actually missed the sudden glimpse. Aha! That must have been it, because now I feel so definitely me. Not so. Not quite so. Sudden glimpse is an innuendo as well as a smack on the face, two things. Sudden glimpse is also a faint intonation of not knowing as well as a jolt of not knowing. So we shouldn't take it either way. If we're going to be here for three days, who ever we are, we're going to stay around for this thing, you're to build up some sort of coupon mentality, that you got the first coupon tonight and maybe your number is going to be called tomorrow. On the other hand, maybe there's so many coupons that your number doesn't stand a chance. So we have that kind of sophisticated and unsophisticated approach to sudden glimpse. It could be a stub on the toe, which actually is sophisticated, or a misstep which we picked up right away, which we considered to be ordinary but maybe is more subtle than the stubbed toe. That's what we have, ladies and gentlemen. We have that situation entirely.

We shouldn't fuss around too much. If you're going to be here for the rest of the weekend, you should know that nobody cares too much about credentials here. Nobody does, especially me. Whether you like me or not is your business and their business. As far as my business is concerned, that I should present these teachings as clearly as I can and as much as you can relate to your experience, in order to do that further, we have to practice this sitting meditation which is, in some sense, not separate from the teachings that we give, that we talk about: sudden glimpse, awakened mind, everyday life. We have a couple of days to go. We'll make a small inroad, hopefully. Perhaps we'll make a small dent in the world of confused and in the world of habitual paranoia. Maybe we can claim, not only claim, maybe we can realize some sort of genuine intelligence which has nothing to do with our history and with our projections about our future. Maybe this three days can be a mission control. And maybe this mission control, as we find out, as we look at it, didn't have any great benefactor to begin with, didn't have any great system, didn't have any intricate electrical connection. To be here, we took a chance. We'll

continue that chance as best we can. I thank you very much, and see you tomorrow. Please sit tomorrow. If we're going to see each other, let's have something to talk about. Thank you very much.