

THE VAJRA REGENT OSEL TENDZIN: Shambhala Training: Level I

Boulder, CC: February 10, 1984

Talk 1

Assistant Director: Good evening and welcome to Shambhala Training. Before we begin tonight's presentation, I would like to say a few words about Shambhala Training and about the founders of the program. Shambhala Training takes its name from the legendary kingdom of Shambhala which is said to have existed in ancient central Asia. This Shambhala Kingdom, has been an inspiration for many societies throughout the world. The Shambhala Training program is a practical means of bringing this inspiration into our lives as individuals. The program was founded in 1977 by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche who is a renowned meditation master and scholar from Tibet and his foremost American student, Osel Tendzin. The program was designed to bring, the wisdom of Shambhala, to share that wisdom with students from the West and to provide a training ground for developing the art of genuine warriorship. It is a rare occurrence for us to have one of the co-founders of the program with us for a public introductory program. Osel Tendzin has taught extensively for the last ten years throughout the United States, Canada and Europe, and it is with great pleasure that I introduce the co-founder of the program, Osel Tendzin.

SHAMBHALA TRAINING LEVEL ONE
ORDINARY MAGIC - THE ART OF BEING HUMAN
THE VAJRA REGENT OSEL TENDZIN
Naropa Institute Assembly Hall
Boulder, Colorado
Talk I

Friday, February 10, 1984, 9:15 p.m.

(All bow.)

THE VAJRA REGENT: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to this Shambhala Training Level One, which is entitled "Ordinary Magic" and subtitled "The Art of Being Human." I would like to welcome you all to the warrior tradition of Shambhala and I would like to explain a little bit about that tradition.

The warrior tradition is a thread which is continuous throughout human history and human mind. It is what you might say the very best of human intention manifest on this particular earth. What we are presenting here tonight and what we would like to present throughout Shambhala Training is that aspect of the very best of human intention as it has been taught, practiced and experienced by human beings like ourselves from ancient times down to the present moment, and I should say up to the present moment.

The Kingdom of Shambhala is symbolic and real. It is symbolic or, you might say, mythological and symbolic in the sense that it ignites and excites us because it is very real in our imagination and not so real in our experience. It is very real in the sense that we all feel excited, inspired and energized by the notion of a pure and uncorrupted line of thought, a pure and uncorrupted line of being, a pure and uncorrupted line of action.

We all feel inspired by a vague possibility that we ourselves are the greatest of warriors, the best of the best. At the same time, we feel somewhat intimidated by that thought, because we have seen that people who become intoxicated by such an idea have generally brought negativity and destruction on themselves and the people around them. So in some ways, as we are, we have those two things. We have the tremendous inspiration about who we are; at the same time, we are somewhat frightened because we know

that the power of that, if distorted, can bring incredible chaos.

So we should begin at the beginning. The powerful aspect of the warrior tradition of Shambhala is that it teaches from the very beginning the notion of wisdom which is not produced by any action, but wisdom which is self-existing wisdom. The Shambhala tradition teaches us that all of us have a self-existing wisdom.

Now, wisdom we should separate from knowledge. Wisdom is innate intelligence. Wisdom does not have to be thought about; wisdom does not have to have any kind of calculation in one's mind; and wisdom is not the product of thinking altogether. So we're talking about presenting Shambhala wisdom here tonight. And that wisdom is totally different than any kind of a self-improvement method that might conventionally exist in our world.

You should understand from the very beginning, if you are to continue with this program, that what we are presenting here is not self-improvement by mechanical means. On the other hand, you should understand that self-improvement is not such a bad thing. But to present it in such a way as to suggest that self-improvement is possible by combining one element and another is wrong and, in fact, it corrupts intelligence.

So presenting the wisdom of Shambhala, first of all, is based on your understanding that we are not trying to creating some kind of self-improvement course, you can take it, feel better and therefore relate to your telephone repairman. You can relate to your supervisor or your boss. You can relate to your wife or your children in a better way. Be sure not to think that. You should actually just erase that whole thing; that's not important. So we're not trying to create a self-improvement movement here with Shambhala Training. And goodness knows, we have enough of those particular movements already.

We are talking about wisdom, and wisdom is not produced by causes. We are not talking about some kind of strange alchemy when we say ordinary magic, that when we get together here we will mix one thing with another and produce something totally different; absolutely not. In fact, we are talking about something which is so real and pure, that we don't have to mix anything at all. That is the wisdom aspect and that also is the ordinary magic.

And that something which is not produced and which is not mixed and which is the basic wisdom of Shambhala is called basic goodness. Basic goodness is exactly what it says. It is good and it is basic. It is like your heart, your veins, your muscles your skin your hair, your eyes and all the rest of it. That is the basic goodness. Who we are, as we are, is basically good. That is the wisdom of Shambhala.

And it is, if I might say, it has nothing to do with positive thinking, nothing whatsoever. It is basically good because it does not involve itself in positive thinking or negative thinking. It is purely the state of being that we are, all of us. The wisdom of Shambhala is presented in this way: That each of us as a human being, all of us without exception, have basic goodness as our primordial nature; that is to say, the nature which exists before our own birth, the nature which exists before our own memory. This particular nature runs through our own perception right now. It is good because it is neither bad nor good.

In a conventional sense, you being here and me being here and talking about this is neither bad nor good. We are not going to produce a great movement of this, neither are we going to produce a bad effect on the world. We are simply here. And that is good because we are here and that's it. Good night, and thank you very much.

(Laughs and laughter.)

If it were that easy it would be so simpler wouldn't it? So simple just to say, "Well, that's it. Thank you very much." No problem.

However, since we have something to -- since we have gathered here together, we might as well talk about some things.

When we talk about basic goodness in Shambhala Training, you should understand there is a difference between goodness which is conditioned, and that is what I mean by self-help. You see when you have this self-help treatment, it is because you basically feel or you ordinarily -- common experience is that you feel uncomfortable and slightly irritated all the time. So you find a few things in your life which make you feel good. It might be food, that's true. It might be sex. It might be business. It might be relationship. It might be intellectual pursuits. But they make you feel good temporarily. That's sort of a self-help idea.

You latch onto something and you say, "This makes me feel good," so you pursue it to the point where you're either the best at it or you fail. And if you, if you're the best at it you have this gnawing irritation that you should be better. Even if there is nobody better than yourself in your field, you still feel that you are threatened because somebody might be better than you someday. Or if you fail, you have the same kind of irritation which is you should be better because you're not good enough.

That's conditioned goodness. It's, you can, you can notice that in any of the endeavors that we have. It might be philosophical, scientific, religious,

psychological, whatever it is. Conditioned goodness is always based on irritation of some kind.

Basic goodness, unconditional goodness, is based on confidence which has no origin. We call the fundamental confidence of a warrior. Warrior does not mean one who makes war. A warrior in this case mean-a human being like ourselves, someone like ourselves, who's just simply being what he or she is without any apologies and without any fear or doubt, straightforward being, unconditional confidence. That is basic goodness or that is the result of basic goodness, we could say. Unconditioned goodness is fundamental confidence.

And there are three aspects of this particular kind of goodness which you should consider. The first and the foremost of this kind of confidence is what we call gentleness; that is to say, the absence of aggression towards oneself. That's the beginning, that you don't hate yourself. Now in many of the so-called self-improvement things that we see in our world we find that very same notion, "Don't hate yourself. Be kind to yourself." But in most cases it means if you have an extra piece of pie it's all right, you don't have to worry. Don't be angry with yourself because you had another piece of pie. Or if you took an extra two percentage points from the particular deal that you made, it's okay. You don't have to be angry, it's only two percentage points.

Gentleness is something different. In the Shambhala tradition we talk about absence of aggression towards oneself as being the softness -softness, tenderness that we all feel, which is unconditional. It's not simply a physical sensation nor is it simply a mental sensation, but it's a total physical and mental experience. That we feel tender is a common experience; in fact, I think it is the common experience of human beings. You know, as we grow up from childhood to adulthood we seem have to develop a situation where we're always looking over our shoulder to see who's watching, to see what's happening. We seem to develop a kind of defense of some kind, defense. We have to build up some kind of armor. We don't exactly know why, but I think the reason is, is because we're fundamentally soft and fundamentally tender-hearted people. In some ways we can't stand the fact that we suffer or that anybody else does.

So in some ways the underlying ground of basic is tenderness, as if you had a wound and put their finger in it. You jump, "Ouch, it That's the way **our -- our** basic makeup is. Now, usually considered to be a very bad deal. If you must be a weakling or you must be of a -- sooner or later somebody's going to get you.

Well, in Shambhala Training we say, "Why not." Otherwise, how can you fall in love? You cannot fall in love unless you have that tenderness, otherwise you'll just be waiting for someone to fall in love with you; and as soon as they do, you'll kick them out because they'll touch on a spot you don't like.

The second aspect of basic goodness is intelligence. That is, once you have the absence of arrogance toward yourself, you have the absence of arrogance towards others. When you don't feel so hard on yourself, when you're not trying to prove that you're the strongest person in the world or that you can exist another hour and a half until you have to go to the next place, then you don't get so angry with other people for holding you up and you don't see the world as a threat. You're not constantly waiting for somebody to attack you and say that, "Aha, I knew it. I knew they'd do that." You're not so cynical about other human beings and not so of them, not so paranoid and afraid that other will destroy you or hurt you, make mincemeat pie you. You're not so afraid anymore. That takes intelligence. It takes intelligence to see, to look, to look at the world around you, which involves a kind of natural curiosity about other people which transcends any kind of self-hatred.

And finally, once you have that, that natural inquisitiveness, you begin to actually long to make contact, long to have full expression of your life, which is the final quality or the third quality of unconditional goodness. And that is fearlessness. That is to make contact with your world without being overly concerned about your own survival. I said overly concerned, so as not to overly concern you about thinking that this is a suicide mission. It is not. We're talking about humanness and goodness and how to work with it. Fearlessness is the willingness to make contact with your world.

First of all, gentleness is making contact with yourself. You don't feel so bad about yourself. You realize that what you are as you are, is basically good. Not in reference to bad, but just basically good as it is.

Secondly, you realize that what you see what you touch, what you hear, your contact, your relationship with the world is not based on fear; therefore, it is intelligent. You can look at it and you can see what's there in your world.

Thirdly, the fearlessness comes because of the previous two; no fear here, no fear there and fearlessness altogether. You can remain friendly with yourself even after you contact your world.

Now, sometimes we find that we feel really good about ourselves, but then circumstances prove us to be wrong. And we think to ourselves "That's right. I knew it. I knew it." But actually, to tell the truth, the point is. is that you have to have the willingness to go beyond your habitual dream of what things should be like. You have to have the courage to have things not go your way. When they don't go your way, that doesn't mean that you've lost the basic goodness or the intelligence; it just means that things didn't go your way. Which is all right, you know. It's fine. Did you every, think about that? You can still remain friendly with yourself even if things don't go your way. So those are the three qualities.

Oh by the way, this business of fearlessness is not based on difficult heroics. You don't have to contort your body and mind into a certain position in order to be fearless. It simply means that when difficulties arise you rely on basic goodness. And when you rely on basic goodness, that means you rely on unconditional basic goodness. That means you don't have to pre-think anything. You don't have to cook up a scheme in order to live your life. You don't have to make continual strategy. Still with me?

Ordinary magic is relying on what we have already. That's ordinary magic, what we call ordinary magic in Shambhala Training. Magic is -- in this case, is not transforming one thing into another thing. You don't have to pull your life up from the depth -- the depths of degradation into the height -- heights of whatever. You don't have to knock out the bricks underneath your monument in order to get down to earth. What we are, as we are, is the magical ingredient to creating an ordinarily sane situation. If we don't do it that way, my friends, we will be creating a continuous deception, a continuous involvement in such degradation. We have to continue to entertain ourselves throughout our lives, even to the point where we have to specify what kind of coffin, what kind of tombstone, how many flowers and where they should be placed when we're dead. Don't you think that' s obsessive? (Laughter.)

I think it's a bit obsessive. We are thinking about our death as soon as we can remember, we're thinking about when we're going to die. That's a bit obsessive. Not that we shouldn't think about it at all, but to make plans so early. Actually to make plans so early is pretty good, but the kind of plans that we make are pretty silly. All we're thinking about is whether or not the coffin has the right handles on it.

Ordinary magic. In Shambhala Training we talk about there are two kinds of attitudes in the world as we know it. One is called setting sun, one is called great eastern sun. Setting sun has the notion of losing power, beginning to die, beginning to fade, falling and finally disappearing. It has

the notion also of perverting the basic goodness into the notion of power over others and power over the environment. Personal power. The perversion of basic goodness as we know it is called personal power over others, oneself, and environment. That's called setting sun. It's going down constantly, it's dying constantly because you're -- when we are constantly trying to have power over others, then we are dying at the same time. Well, first of all, we never could have over that many of them, if we start to die they will say, "Bye-bye have power over some will say, "Bye-bye. You had power over me but you're dying. So goodbye. And I think I'll take your baggage and go." You know like Valpone in those -- those stories. Those stories are not old stories, they're new stories like, you know, rich man's family. And all the relatives are waiting for him to die to see who can get the money. We're like that a lot in our lives. We're waiting to see when we can get the money, when we can get the power. That is not real goodness. That's setting sun, That is dying in ourselves. When we start thinking that way, when we start behaving that way, we start to die. Because we start to drool and we start to grasp and we want to get that little something that we can hold onto even from a corpse. And the corpse of our own memory, the corpse of our previous relationship and the corpse of our future relationship, we try it.

But that's setting sun as opposed to what we call great eastern sun. In Shambhala Training great eastern sun is the way, is the vision. Power over others is artificial. Power over oneself is artificial. Power over anything is artificial. If you have to have power over something, then you're living an artificial life.

Great eastern sun vision is, to begin with, don't rely on your body as the only source of enjoyment. If you do, you will find out that your body will not last that long. Secondly, don't rely on your relationships as the only source of enjoyment, because you will find out that your relationships do not last that long. And thirdly, don't rely on your mind as the only source of enjoyment because you'll find that mind is fickle.

In the great eastern sun vision we talk about the harmony of those three things. The body, relationship and the mind should be harmonious that the three together manifest the unconditional basic goodness. Therefore, we talk about the art of being human.

Now, the main question for us as human beings or not we are aware of our inheritance; not we know or are awake to the fact that ongoing, uninterrupted stream of goodness, capital G, which is our birthright and is our nature as human beings. That is our problem, so to speak, our question

about being alive. It's not all those questions you think you know, it's not all those particular problems you have, but it's really simple. It's a question of staying awake.

Shambhala Training is a means to uncover that basic goodness. Also it's a means to -- you know, it's like lighting a match in a way, it just sort of lights (hits microphone), lights when you strike it to its striker. It lights, it creates a flame, it creates a light. Shambhala Training is like that. It creates that light so that you can see the unconditional basic goodness itself. Not that you can see your name on it. It's not important to see your name on it, by the way. In fact, if you're going to continue with this program, your name will probably get lost in -- in the shuffle, to speak. Just (Hits microphone) hits it, you see. Shambhala Training is meant to ignite the flame of awareness which makes you awake to your own inheritance, basic goodness, which is not a product of birth .

In other words, it's not because you are born in Colorado or West Germany or England or South Africa. Basic goodness in this case means that you are born, therefore, you are awake. Therefore, the goodness will undoubtedly occur to you at some time or other. In this case, Shambhala Training is bringing home the point that that basic goodness is here now, not sometime or other. In some ways I suppose everybody here has felt it, otherwise you wouldn't be here. Did you hear that before somewhere?

In any case, you this -- I'm going to finish up now. In order to do this that you should know: That in terms of ordinary magic is two things. First of all, we talk about ordinary. Now ordinary means that things are difficult. That being alive, having a human body, working in this world, living in this world, it's difficult. It's hard actually; it's more than difficult, it's hard. That's the ordinary part. There's another part to that, and that is that it's hard because we don't remember that basically, basically we are good. No problem with us. No problem at all. And we don't remember that. Therefore, it is hard to be that way.

Now, magic is easy. Which means that since we are already good, there is no point in trying to prove it. So ordinary magic means it's ordinarily hard to do it and it's magical because it's easy to do. That's Shambhala Training. Ordinary because if you try and sit and practice meditation this weekend, if you have never done it, you think to yourself before you even start, "I can't do it. This is too hard. What they expect is too much. Let's see, I can take two hours, I can go to lunch, I can come back. I can say I have a dentist's appointment." It's too hard even to relate to it.

Then again, if you do it, you think to yourself, "What is this? It's relatively easy to just sit here. It's not even a big deal to just sit here." Then you start to say, "What do they want? Why are they doing this? I'm just sitting here and nothing seems to be happening and I'm just sitting here. And it's easy to do. So what's the big deal?"

And so we call that ordinary magic. You begin to wake up. Finally you begin to wake up. It's not that easy, but it's pretty hard. That's why we call it Shambhala Training; we didn't call it "Shambhala Being." We didn't say, "Well, come into the room and just be." We said, "Come into the room and train." Train, you almost have an image of, well, you know, some sort of dog commercial. You put the dog food down and (makes face) Shambhala Training, go on that burger train.

It's hard to do. It's hard to do. To sit still, very hard to do. But it's the best thing to do in terms of how to make a first step into connecting, with that which you've always had, that which has been there from the very beginning. As far as back as you can remember, you can remember basic goodness. Just think about it. As far back as you can remember you can remember basic goodness as probably your first thought. Now, there have been a lot of things that have happened since then. And it's not your fault, so don't be upset.

But it is possible to reconnect to that basic goodness without making yourself into an idiot; that is to say, without making a sort of false heroic out of it. You don't have to do this program in order to prove that you can -- can do it. Or you don't have to do this program in order to put another notch in your belt in terms of the things that you have done that have made you part of, you know, the current world, society. In any case, it's not going to work. Any of those things are not going to work. The only thing that works is your basic intelligence, who you are.

The practice of meditation is not confined to Shambhala Training, by the way. Shambhala Training happens to be a good way of starting. Meditation in its purest sense is simply being with what is. And hopefully through this particular program you can accomplish that and, therefore, make your connection to ordinary magic. You don't have to produce miracles in order to know that you exist. You don't have to show others through miracle that you exist.

But if you lead a very simple and direct life and if you don't become angry with yourself, especially if you're not perfect to yourself. And if you become in some ways simple to yourself, it's very powerful. The world is affected in a generous way. And I think

that's -- that would be a good thing for all of us, to affect the world in a generous way. After all, we don't know how much time we have. So let's put together the ordinary and the magic, okay? The hard and the easy, and do this program called Shambhala Training.

I think that's it. So if you would like to ask any questions, there will be microphones available to you. And please feel free to ask anything you'd like.

All right. Anybody?

QUESTION: I don't -- I don't have a question other than could someone please get some air in here. People are getting very sick back here.

THE VAJRA REGENT: Well, perhaps we have to sort of blast through one of these walls to get some air in here. I don't know how we can get any -

QUESTION: Nor there's a door over there. Thank you.

THE VAJRA REGENT: Oh, I see. Yes. Will someone please open the door? Good.

Does anybody else have anything to say? (Laughter)

QUESTION: You said that you shouldn't rely on simply your body or your intelligence or your relationships. You said you should rely --

THE VAJRA REGENT: I said that body, relationships and mind.

QUESTION: Okay. Relationships and mind.

REGENT: Well, just to set the record straight, you know, I -

QUESTION: Thank you.

REGENT: Yes.

QUESTION: And you said you should rely on a combination of those three.

THE VAJRA REGENT: No, no. I didn't say that. I didn't say you should rely on a combination of --

QUESTION: Am I on drugs?

THE VAJRA REGENT: You might be.

QUESTION: Excuse me?

THE VAJRA REGENT: I said that in Shambhala vision -- in the Shambhala vision we see those, we experience those three things as harmonious, one thing. Usually what we have is we rely on one or the other to provide enjoyment for ourselves. In other words, in a body we provide enjoyment for ourselves seemingly through whatever happens with the body. We look at it in the mirror, you know, fix it up and do the thing you do with it and you try to keep it -- try to keep it alive as long as you can and looking good. And second is through relationship, and try to keep something going with somebody else and feeling good. And the third is analyzing both of those and thinking that as being good and continuing that way.

QUESTION: But what about the harmonizing?

THE VAJRA REGENT: Right. What about it?

QUESTION: They all seem -- all those three things seem to be kind of an egocentric sort of way to deal with the world.

THE VAJRA REGENT: Could be or couldn't be. Could be or couldn't be. The whole point -- I think that's the whole point of what we're doing here, is that fragmented -- a fragmented world is like that, that either you rely on your body, you rely on your intellectual thing, your relationship, or rely simply on your thought process, your mind, to keep you going. But what we're trying to say is that the whole thing is one process; it's not three things altogether; it's one thing. And that once you synchronize your body and mind and your speech altogether through discipline, then you don't have to rely on simply one or the other and think that that's your only way out of

existence. On the other hand, you don't have on rely on all three either, because you begin to relax and see that's the way things are. You have body, it's all right no matter what it looks like. It might be fat, might be skinny, tall, whatever. You have intellect which relates to other things. And you have a mind which sort of covers everything.

And that's -- they're not a problem when they're related to as one thing. When they're broken down and become subjects, in other words, they become -- I'm sorry, more like objects of your scrutiny. How much time do you spend on your body? How much time do you spend on your intellectual pursuit? How much time do you spend on your mental world? When you think about it, it's sometimes very fragmented. But when you think about it further, it's the same thing. Are we talking about the same thing?

QUESTION: Yes. Thank you.

THE VAJRA REGENT: You're welcome.

QUESTION: I'm not clear on the relationship between unconditioned goodness and conditioned goodness.

THE VAJRA REGENT: Yeah.

QUESTION: How do they relate to each other?

THE VAJRA REGENT: Yeah. Well, conditioned goodness means that you take the basic goodness, which is unconditioned, and because of feeling confused or somewhat hazy you try to make that into a project. In other words, you try to feel good by doing something or by thinking something or by feeling something, which is the same thing I was talking about earlier. With your body you try to feel good with your body. If that doesn't work, you try to feel good with your intellect. If that doesn't work, you try to feel good just in the mental realm altogether.

QUESTION: Is that to say that there's no place then for conditioned goodness?

THE VAJRA REGENT: None whatsoever. If you have conditioned goodness -- if you have conditioned goodness, you have -- you know what you have?

QUESTION: No.

THE VAJRA REGENT: You have the possibly for murder. It's true, because once you have conditioned goodness, it's based on being good because the -- all the conditions are right. If not, what happens is you get so freaked out that you begin to get so angry that you might actually (holds his hand up like shooting someone) or (then like shooting himself in the head).

QUESTION: Is that what's like talking about credentials? Is that it -

THE VAJRA REGENT: Sure. It's like being -you know, like trying to be who you are and prop that up by all the conditions of your memories of the things that you felt good about the things that you felt bad about. You know, the things that you felt -- felt good about, you sort of stack them up in your pockets and everything. And the things that you felt bad about will usually wind up in your socks or somewhere down below, right? But occasionally by mistake you might get the sock where -- where the shirt would be and you think to yourself, "This is wrong." (Holds hand up like shooting himself in the head).

QUESTION: Uh-huh.

THE VAJRA REGENT: occasionally it might happen that you make a mistake. You see, when you make a mistake then you're getting closer to what we're talking about about basic goodness in terms of gentleness. In gentleness, even if you make a mistake you don't feel bad about yourself because you realize that that mistake is part of the tenderness of what you are as a human being. You don't have to fake it.

QUESTION: Thank you.

THE VAJRA REGENT: You're welcome.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, I think we probably should stop at this point, because it is earlier than I thought it was. And also because I would like to encourage you to take part in this program, which involves the sitting practice of meditation.

How many people here have not practiced meditation? Could you raise your hands? And don't worry about it, you won't be condemned to hell

if you raise your hands. Just raise them up higher, higher.

(People in audience raise their hands.)

Come on. Come on. Come on. Come on. Let me just see it. So I know nobody has never ever, never? Okay. Thank you.

Sitting practice of meditation is discovering ordinary magic. It works this way: You sit with yourself by yourself, and if nothing happens you feel frustrated. That's ordinary. If something happens you feel excited. That's magic. When you combine the two, you have ordinary magic. And you don't mover you still sit there. That's what's called warrior practice, sitting practice. When nothing happens and when something happens, you still maintain your basic being, who you are. And it's just fine. It's actually delightful, it's gentle, it's good and at the same time it's fearless. Nothing happens, therefore you get excited. When you get excited, nothing happens. It's hard and it's easy and it's ordinary magic. This is what we have to present. I hope you enjoy it.

I'll see you tomorrow night. Thank you.

(The talk concluded at 10:15 p.m. February 10th 1984.)