

Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin: New Ears

May 21, 1978

VAJRACARYA: This is the greatest pleasure. We have a special guest speaker. [Laughter] His Excellency the Regent represents how communications from the vajra master to the student are made. His understanding and depth have proved to us the proper way to go about practicing vajrayana, and his visit here has become very powerfully important for all of us, both the teacher and the students. Therefore I wish to encourage you to listen properly so you can find out how to go about it. Thank you.

VAJRA REGENT: To begin, we have heard how to cut discursive thought and furthermore, how to cut the root of the klesas by developing some sense of sacred action. Sacred action in this case means entirely uncovering any sense of holding back. But the question still remains in your minds, as seminary participants: how to do that? I hear you've been asking a lot of people how to do that, as if you didn't bear how to do that. I would like to make a very bold statement to begin with: you have already heard how to do that, although you missed it. If that is the case, we could go over the ground again.

CUTTING THE ROOT OF THE KLESHAS

How to cut the root, how actually to disperse the karmic chain reaction—this is very important for us in practical terms, because that is what we are dealing with all the time. We're not of the lineage of words and theories; we are of the practice lineage, which tells how to do it. So although you may take a lot of notes—I see you're taking a lot of notes—I would like to tell you how to do it. Now I've been accused, as Vajra Regent, of being an intensely practical person. Some people resent that, but I have a certain conviction that my practicality or my teaching to you is based 100 percent on what I have learned from the vajra master. So I cannot take any credit personally for practicality. Practicality is 100 percent part of our lineage. So we should actually be concerned with how to do it, how to cut the root of the karmic chain reaction in our life—the root kleshas.

Now, the first thing you heard is that you can actually stop discursive thought. And the second thing you heard is that if there are any further tendencies for discursive thought or identification with yourself as an entity to continue, you can uproot that tendency by ransacking. Ransacking is done by understanding that every action is a sacred action.

How is it possible that your action is sacred? We could say "sacred" is simply a word which we have heard which means some kind of magic. The druids had those stones standing around, and people put potions into water—and that's "sacred." But we're so cynical and so tough that we don't believe any of that. Yet the word "sacred" still has some kind of fascination for us, some kind of kicker or seduction. We are magnetized by the word "sacred." So how do we realize sacred action in terms of thoughts, emotion, body,

action, environment? How do we realize sacredness so that we can actually cut the root of the klesas?

The entrance to vajrayana, to the immutable path which leads directly to unsurpassable, great enlightenment, is the relationship between the guru and the disciple. We have already heard about and studied the case of Marpa and Naropa: Naropa appeared in the sky before Marpa in the form of Hevajra and asked, "Who do you make obeisance to, the deity or the guru?" And Marpa said, being fascinated by phenomena, "To the deity." Suddenly Naropa appeared and said, without the guru, there is no yidam, and basically no dharma." So since we, all of us here at the seminary, are embarking on the vajrayana path at this point, one thing should be at the tip of our tongue, the tip of our mind, our thought and our environment. without the guru there is no dharma. This relates to how to cut the root of the klesas and to sacredness.

Sacredness cannot be explained by terms. Sacredness cannot be invented like the magic of Houdini or some kind of setting sun magician. Sacredness can only be experienced in terms of the vajra master, who is the one who has demonstrated in the phenomenal world the truth of Buddha's teaching. In other words, he has demonstrated the four noble truths, which are the essence of Buddha's teachings—the four noble truths.

You might think that we are in the wrong section of our seminary to discuss this right now, but I don't think so. The vajra master is the one who has demonstrated the true quality, the truth, of the four noble truths. That might be redundant, but it's the truth of redundancy anyway. He is the one who has demonstrated suffering as true; the one who has demonstrated that the root of suffering passion, aggression and ignorance true; the one who has demonstrated that it is possible to cut through completely the root of suffering—passion, aggression, and ignorance; and the one who shows the path to do so. These four noble truths are not hinayana truths or mahayana truths or vajrayana truths—they are the truth.

So getting back to how we do it—it is a matter of the last straw. It is a matter of fence sitting, how we sit on the edge of the fence, or what we call hesitation. How we be hesitant? Is that English: how we be hesitant? Well, it's lineage English in any case at this point—how we be hesitant. Being whimsical at this point, it seems to me—that's what we say, "it seems"—that nobody knows how to sit on the edge of the fence, nobody knows how to listen to the vajra dharma, the vajrayana teachings.

That doesn't reflect blame on anybody here, it's simply how the path works and how you've come to this point where you're hearing vajrayana teachings and being completely freaked out. It's slightly like your suit doesn't fit anymore, your tie is askew, your lotus posture is whatever, your back is bent and your hair is rumpled. What are you going to do? You have to hear these vajrayana teachings and yet you feel so awkward hearing them.

The vajra master said that you can actually stop discursive thought and cut the root of the klesas, and you say, "How?" That is some indication that you missed a little step. That little step we are talking about is developing new ears. developing a sense of hearing which is not particularly through the senses. Now I know you've had abhidharma classes and you've heard about the senses and how all the objects of all the mental events happen in that way. But this is vajrayana, and we're not exactly talking about your senses and mental events. We're talking about something much more total, much more complete. So how to

listen, how to hear the vajra master, has nothing to do with conventional truth whatsoever. It is a departure from that. And that departure is not going against the path—it is some sense of waking up to fruition on the path. If you can actually hear the vajra dharma, the vajrayana dharma, then there is some sense of waking up. Your ears become unplugged.

You had so much trouble with the last talk. Or maybe you didn't have so much trouble with the last talk. But anyway, if you did, it's because of memory. Memory means seeing the vajra master as an object. It means there is still some kind of deification, some kind of hoping for the best. The vajra master is Vajradhara—which is certainly not hoping for the best. And Vajradhara is what is.

So how do you listen to and hear that dharma? It is only through some sense of complete open heart, open heart surgery, that happens in the vajrayana only. This is the real open heart surgery and it has no anesthetic. It is the willingness to be completely honest with the vajra master, so honest that your little toys and games of being tactful with the kalyanamitra absolutely do not work. Right? Just look up for a minute from your notes. I would say that they do not work. You, relationship with the vajra master is something different. With the kalyanamitra you could still scheme a little bit: you could still hope for your passion, you could still hope for your seduction, you could still hope for your credit or your noncredit. In fact, with the kalyanamitra you could hope that your noncredit was such good noncredit that the kalyanamitra would recognize you as being worthy because you were dealing with your neurosis.

Now we have a different situation: how to listen, how to be in the presence of the vajra master. And that is based on the fact that your neurosis is what has been called in the past, rat shit. This, by the way, is again no sense of put down. It is trying to pull together grist for the mill, it's providing a grinding factor. Rat shit seems to consist of little pellets and in the vajrayana they start to grind together. So you can't even rely on your rat shit to be your means of communicating with the vajra master. If I might say so, your means of communicating with the vajra master are obsolete. It's a very scientific, technological world at this point. It's almost stainless steel—but that stainless steel has a shine to it, an attractive shine. We are attracted by the glow of that stainless steel—so clean, so brilliant.

Knowing how to listen is the same as understanding devotion in the vajrayana. Devotion in the vajrayana is seeing the person of the vajra master as Vajradhara himself embodied in human form—which has no apology and no memory. Can you listen without any memory? That sounds very zenny, doesn't it? [Laughs.] Don't moan and groan. "Can you do it?" That's not zenny. Zennies wouldn't say, "Can you do it?" We say, "Can you do it?" We're not relying on metaphors. Can you do it? Listen without memory. That means you have to be somewhat stupid and somewhat bright at the same time. You are stupid because you want to cut the root of the klesas [laughs]. Yeah. And because you know there's a method for doing so, you are smart. So you have a whole deal here. You present your feast in front of the vajra master, and it's called the feast of devotion. [Laughs.]

Actually, from my point of view, which is point of view, I see that nobody's holding back. Everybody here would love to be devoted and just throw forth their cantaloupes [laughter], ripe, ripe cantaloupes. You are just wondering how to do so. At the same time you are carrying mahayana and hinayana baggage. Now this hinayana-mahayana baggage that you are carrying is not bad; it is the sack that your cantaloupe is in. You should take

out that cantaloupe and cut it up and present it very straightforwardly. Nobody has anything to lose—except the cantaloupe, that is, which is yourself.

Your relationship with the vajra master, your kind of naive approach (or I should say *our* naive approach) of devotion first of all involved with thinking that you have something that the vajra master wants. That is basically a mistake. If you understand devotion, it is not a matter of what you can give to the vajra master. The vajra master doesn't need your gift particularly. He is willing to go on and teach without any gifts. At the same time he would like your devotion, which is not a gift. Your devotion is a proclamation of new ears, new hearing.

Do you remember the sense of hearing the teachings in the very early stages of our path? Do you remember the sravakas? They hear the teaching. Now we have a different kind of hearing, a different kind of sravakas. You are still hearing the teaching, but you're hearing with your heart and your ears. It is not a bleeding heart. We'll leave that for the tirtikas; we'll leave that for the theists. There's no sacred heart in terms of, you know, the blood coming down. But it's a matter of sacred hearing. What is that again? Sacred hearing is realizing that the vajra master is Vajradhara.

What are the qualities of Vajradhara? Does anybody know? Probably not yet, you haven't gotten there yet. We could say they are what the vajra master talked about last time. Let's say that they are nondwelling, unobstructed and unceasing. That's how you should hear. You should bear with ears which are unceasing, nondwelling and unobstructed. There should be no blocked passages in your ears because you see that the vajra master is quite complete in the teachings and you see that you actually could learn something after all.

To do that, there is one binding factor which is necessary. This is called a samaya vow. Well, at this point let's not say vow, but let's just introduce ourselves to the concept of samaya, which you will no doubt hear more about. But let's first think of that sense of hearing which binds you with the vajra master in a complete experience. Complete experience means that there is no you to hold onto what happens, there is no other to comment to you and there is energy which is not bound by this and that. Samaya vow means recognizing that the last fortification against becoming one with the teachings is listening for yourself, and listening for yourself is not hearing the vajra master. So samaya is a kind of bond, a cosmic glue factory. It binds the student and the teaching and the teacher together in such a way that only rudrahood could dislodge or melt that binding factor. Only a complete reversion to degraded life could change that bond.

Now as you students enter this path and hear the vajrayana teachings, you should again remind yourselves that you are not here for a good time. That good time was over a long time ago when you put in your application to enter the path—in other words, when you took refuge, if you remember that. That was your application to end entertainment. You did that. And then you made a further statement that since you had ended entertainment, there was no point in holding onto your personal good discipline and you could actually expand further.

So now you come to the vajrayana, where you have to engage in combat. This combat is not the zen combat of making a clean stroke, out of your aesthetic perception. This combat has been described as like having an alligator on your knee. If you want to listen, you have to be so attentive to that alligator on your knee. Do you see what I mean?

An alligator is on your knee, and it has tremendous jaws and teeth. So you sit up really straight and listen with ears that are new ears because it means life and death.

This is not particularly like the television series, "General Hospital." The life and death of the buddhist teaching depend on us; they depend on our relationship with the vajra master. So the samaya vow will bind you to the teacher and the practice. Taking that samaya vow is not a matter of readiness. It is a matter of accomplishing beforehand the cutting of discursive thought and the ransacking of the root of discursive thought, the klesas. So that is how we go about these things.

Personally, I think I would like to say for myself-whatever that is-that I do not feel particularly smug in thinking that I have the answers to tell you. But I have one thing to tell you: I listen to the vajra music. I haven't found that McDonald's to stop off at, that resting place where you can pull in and have a hamburger—no, not yet. And to tell you the truth, I don't believe in it. My personal feeling is that I would like to listen more and more, as much as I can, because every time I listen, I hear dharma. That dharma may be in the form of a necktie or a pair of shoes or drapes or a shrine cloth or a *Garuda V* or a visit to the 1978 Seminary. So try to listen and hear what happens in the vajra world. This is your opportunity. Do you have any questions?

QUESTION: You talked about hesitancy, and sitting on the fence, which usually implies—

VAJRA REGENT: Yeah, jumping off the fence?

Q: -or not jumping off the fence.

VR: Which one?

Q: Well, the usual implication is that sitting on the fence is in some way holding back. But you're saying here that you have to sit on the edge of the fence because that's being attentive to the alligator on your knee.

VR: That's right.

“S: So, how do you know which one you are doing?”

VR: Well, I think everyone here feels that they have to jump off the fence in order to achieve something. They think they're going to hear the vajrayana teachings once they jump, once they really hear the vajra master. What I'm saying is to stay on the fence and teeter a little while. Just keep your awareness almost on the edge of a shoestring. Then you will hear much more clearly—because the act of jumping off is merely your fantasy, your expectation about vajrayana. Vajrayana is staying on the fence. It's a very thin barbed wire, which may be giving you a little bit of a pinch in the ass. But you go back and forth and listen with that sense of pain and pleasure together.

S: Thank you.

VR: You're welcome.

S: It seems to me that so much of the time you don't even know you're holding back until you hit a situation where you feel caught or something. So you're trying to hear with no blocked passages, and yet you might not even know the place where it's blocked....

VR: That's where devotion comes in. Devotion is admitting that you don't know a place where it's blocked. You know, it comes right down to that with all of us. Everyone would like to be so smart, so clear. We heard the hinayana-mahayana. We got the whole thing down right. So now we can hear the "vajrayana—but not quite. We still have a sense of cloudiness. Well, here we go: admit that cloudiness and present it right here at the feet, so to speak, of the vajra master. Present it. It's a good gift: it's good ears, and we shouldn't be afraid of that. I'm sure the vajra master won't give us bad points [Rinpoche and the Vajra Regent exchange glances]—at least I'm reasonably sure. [Laughter] You're talking about holding back, right?

S: And not knowing. I mean—

VR: You don't know anyway, so...

S: Yes.

VR: Yes. [Laughter]

VIDYADHARA: Holding back means being caught.

VR: Being caught.

V: Yes. She's been caught many times.

VR: [Laughs] Is that true?

S: What? That I've been caught a lot?

VR: Many times?

S: Yes, pretty many [laughs].

VR: Well, what are you going to do with that? This is it.

Q: Mm-hmm. I'm not scared. [Laughter.]

VR- Well, would you present that?

Q: Yes.

VR- You're not going to hold back on that? [Pause.]

V: Sing.

VR: Sing? [Laughter.] Okay, here goes: Laaa! [Sings in high falsetto. Laughter.] Can you sing?

Q: What would you like to hear? [Laughter.]

VR: I would like some operatic tones. [Laughter.] I don't have such a good voice, you know. But go ahead.

Q: I don't have such a good voice either.

VR: We'll match tones together. The highest soprano, let's hear the highest soprano you can do. Come on, come on.

Q: Laaa! [Sings one extremely high note. Laughter.]

VR: Okay, I'm completely intimidated by that. All right, all right, let's do again. One-two-three, we'll do it together, okay? As high as you can, as high you can. One, two, three:

VR and Q: Eee! [Both emit one loud high screech. Laughter.]

VR: Now, one more thing. Sing not just one note, but three notes like: La, la, [makes three high sounds] , okay?

Q: Okay.

VR: Three notes, okay. All right, ready? Okay.

Q: [Squeaks out three high notes. Laughter.]

VR: Very good, very good. Thank you.

V: That's the Polack.

VR: What? Is the Polack there? [Laughter.] Oh, all the way in the back. [Laughs.] It's hard to notice a Polack when he's standing in front of a red curtain. Okay.

Q: How do you give the gift of memory?

VR: Well, I think we talked about memory as some kind of discursive thought right? And we talked about memory as twofold memory: discursive thought and the root of discursive thought. We've already heard how to cut discursive thought and the root-but we don't have the feeling. The feeling of doing it is devotion to the vajra master as the embodiment of all the buddhas. That's how to give the gift of memory.

Q: Well, let's put it this way. [Laughter.]

VR: Okay,

Q: It sounds very smooth but-

VR: Smooth? No.

Q: Look, just a moment. I have no reservations. I don't--

VR: You have no reservations?

Q: No. I can sing or do whatever. But, you know, memory is memory.

VR: What is memory then?

Q: You know, the habitual patterns.

VR: Yeah, well, *give* that then, give the habitual patterns completely to the vajra master.

Q: In one stroke?

VR: No, two strokes. Well, at least at this point we're talking about two strokes. Maybe later on the vajra master will tell you about the one stroke. But let's talk about two strokes. First there is kind of just basically blah-blah-blah going on in your mind. You know, blah-blah-blah? Gold leaf, red curtains, red satin, the vajra regent has on a blue suit-you know? Discursive thought. Bang! You cut it off. Remember that?

Q: Mm-hmm.

VR: just cut it off. Then there's a kind of residual memory that occurs, right? So you want to uproot that memory. How to do so is actually to see the vajra master as the embodiment of all the buddhas and all the teaching that you've heard so far, that everybody has heard so far, right? You've heard all this teaching, and you don't even care how much you've paid for it--You are so actually in love with that teaching which is embodied in the vajra master. So what was your question? I forgot.

Q: I don't know if there is any question.

VR: I don't either. [Pause.] Well, that's the point.

Q: Yes. Thank you.

VR: Just put it right on the line.

Q: I think I got the point.

VR: Yes. Thank you.

Q: Sometimes you have some sense that there is some kind of process going on of thoughts being cut through and things dropping away, and then there's some confusion. And there seems to be some desire to maintain that process of thoughts dropping away and being cut through.

VR: Mm-hmm.

Q: But why is there some variation in that? You can get into that process, but then it comes and goes away again.

VR: Well, you know, it's like a tasty meal. Tomorrow, for the seminary dinner we're going to have steak. [Laughs.] Right? We're going to have steak tomorrow. How does that feel?

Q: It should be tasty.

VR: Yeah, that's it. We're going to have steak tomorrow.

Q: All right!

VR: Well, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you very much for your kind attention. And I would like to thank the whole Vajradhatu community at this point for providing such a seminary. I think you should thank them as well. The Vajradhatu people who arranged this basically did not work for their own benefit: they worked for your benefit. You should know that, It's not simply that you filled your application out and walked in here and the whole thing worked very smoothly. it's not that you drove up, flew up, presented your ticket and here you are. Not quite. People worked hard for you to be here. And above all I would like to thank the vajra master for allowing you to come here and allowing me to speak to you. Well, we have a long way to go.