

VROT TALK TO TEENAGERS MARCH 4, 1988 DDZ Halifax

Transcribed by Zeb Zuckerburg

VAJRA REGENT OSEL TENDZIN: Good afternoon. Well one of the reasons why I thought it would be good to get together to talk is because your parents, because of your parents, because they were interested perhaps in having some further discussion about why we do what we do with qualities of teenagers (?). So I thought maybe I might discuss a little bit how we became involved in all of this buddhism and Shambala and maybe what attracted us as parents to this discipline and in that way how you people are involved in this because obviously your life whether you practice meditation or not is somewhat saturated with Buddhist discipline and shambala discipline because of your home atmosphere and because of the things that happen around here and because of your relation to your parents and also because Rinpoche in his will said that it would be really good if all of the children not only of your generation but children of the future had a good understanding of dharma and good buddhist discipline. So those are some of the reasons why I thought it would be a good idea to get together and talk and I think by way of history although you are all different ages your parents are close to the same age and we all had very similar experiences growing up and we had similar experience about the time that we met Rinpoche and I think that's important because there are similarities not so much because of a particular time when the 60's or the 70's or the 80's or whatever but as you grow and you begin to experience different things there's a kind of similarity in people's experience.

A kind of common ground that people feel and the reason why you are here as teenagers is because it's generally understood that teenagers feel the same things. That is not meant to be a joke. So when we met Rinpoche there was a lot of uncertainty in our lives and a lot of confusion. And at the same time you could say that everybody was sort of searching for something because the materialism of this particular society and more American society than Canadian society didn't prove to be all that attractive to us at the time and now I'm talking about the late 60's early 70's and I was in my 20's but other people were younger and because of the time and because of what was happening there was a lot of dissatisfaction and a lot of uncertainty. What shall we actually do with our lives, what shall we hold onto and what shall we take to be something we should follow as a path and everybody experimented with drugs especially in the late 60's -- lot of drugs. Experimented is a funny word -- used -- and sex and dropping out as they used to say -- dropping out of school, dropping back in, dropping out again. So there were a lot of things of being not satisfactory, and at that particular juncture in our lives we met Rinpoche who talked about pain. Pain from the point of view of dissatisfaction and uncertainty. That kind of pain, so in some ways he was addressing our direct experience and at the same time he was talking about dharma. Because the Buddha taught from the very beginning that existence as we know it, your existence, my existence, is marked by suffering. It's the characteristic of existence is to suffer.

Now suffering you can't take it in just a kind of ordinary way. Suffering is not just feeling hurt, but suffering in the Buddhist way is some sort of underlying groundlessness in your life. Not having a ground to stand on. Not having a real clear notion of who you are and what you're doing and because of

that there is a constant feeling that things aren't exactly going right, even if things are going right there's still something in the background which is kind of edgy and anxious. So Buddha taught that as a basic first noble truth, and my own personal experience and that of your parents and you can ask them if they're around is that very same thing that when we met Rinpoche there was lots of that. So there was a connection, an immediate click. When he talked about life and its particular aspects and the fact of it everybody sort of woke up, all at once, and that's a vast majority of the students now that are Rinpoche's students had that experience at that time. Everybody sort of woke up at once and said "Oh, right, that's what it's about."

Now in terms of your own life, most of you, I think everybody moved here from someplace else. Isn't that right? There's nobody here from Halifax, from Nova Scotia? And you moved here because your parents moved here and they moved here because Rinpoche said we should move here; this is where Shambhala would be. So we came here and a lot of you came kicking and screaming. It wasn't all that much fun. Not wanting to be here but in some ways you can't miss the point that your experience is very similar to everybody's experience. There's a certain point in your life you feel -- a question comes up about what am I going to do and how am I going to work with my situation. How am I going to work with my emotions? How am I going to work with my own energy, with my body. How am I going to work with feeling dissatisfied. Now perhaps I might be judging it wrong that you are actually quite satisfied with everything that's happening in your life but I have my doubts. I have a feeling that everybody here has the same kind of uncertainty. Especially if you're a teenager I mean there's a lot of things that are kind of like crossroads. What are you going to do next or how are you going to get through this year or something like that. So that basic connection in terms of our experience and your experience and everybody's at a certain point is the same. So basically how do you work with it and how do you work with your mind when things are unsatisfactory. When you feel emotionally upset or physically hurt or when you feel just restless and uncertain how do you work with your mind. Well here's some obvious things and the most obvious thing is that nobody really wants to do it.

To work with your mind it's much easier to let things just run on or so it seems because to work with your mind takes effort and somehow we feel that the most pleasurable thing to do in life is not to do anything much or to do whatever we like so to speak. However, it seems to happen that whenever your life is not totally satisfying and that when you get into a situation where you can do what you want you start to think of other things that you want or that you want to do.

So mind is like a ball, bouncing constantly downhill... bump bump bump bump bump; doesn't seem to come to rest in any one point. The moment you are satisfied with something, something else appears -- so you run after that and if you can't get it you're frustrated. If you get it you're frustrated because if you get it you don't want to lose it. At the same time if you get it you think how can I make this better, how can I get more of it. So there's a constant feeling of restlessness and wanting to accomplish something but nobody knows what. So that means you have to learn to work with your mind because mind is the whole thing. In Buddhist teaching they say that mind precedes body (inaudible) and I think you can figure that in your own life when you have (inaudible) desire originates in your mind. When you want something it originates in your mind. Now it could be because of your own projections or

what you see or what you hear or what you're used to if you live in a family, for instance, that really likes music you might be affected by all sorts of music, or if you live in a family that likes a particular kind of food you might go after that. So a lot of it has to do with your environment, what stimulates you. But there's something else, there's something more than that, there's kind of a very basic attraction to things. But most of the time when you're attracted to something you have no idea how to work with it even if you achieve what you want so that's simply a matter of taking the time to look at what's actually happening in your mind. But that means you need some discipline. If you don't have discipline you can't and discipline actually needs a reference. What discipline means is to like if you have a monkey for example, either keep it on a leash or if you don't it will jump around and create havoc in your house. So the leash is the discipline and the monkey is your mind. In terms of the discipline of looking at your mind and knowing actually what mind is, if there's such a thing, is called meditation and meditation is something that nobody really wants to do and not just yourselves although some of you may have practice quite a bit. I know some people have taken Shambhala training.

But the problem with working with your mind is that you are rubbing up against yourself all the time and you're rubbing up against what it is that you want and what it is that you can't have and underneath that is just basic energy. Just basic movement, that's all. There isn't anything, really at the beginning of all this including what I'm talking about now. Aside from the fact that I walked in here and sat down there's no origin to all this, you know what I mean. It doesn't come from anywhere what I'm talking about right now, it doesn't come from anywhere. So the basic thing with your own mind is it doesn't come from anywhere either so because of that we try to make things solid and we try to get what we think we want. So we need to have some sort of reference to how to work with that kind of energy. And sitting meditation is basically putting yourself in one spot for a period of time and not moving and that's very basic. It doesn't even have to do with what you do when you sit there. There's breathing technique; sure breathing technique is kind of like an anchor because of your thought process. But the really basic thing is not to move. Now there's two ways to really look at that. Not to move means not to move because of impulse because of just a sudden arising in your mind of thoughts or feelings not to move because of just impulse. So to sit with your impulse is basically not moving. Now that might seem a little bit complicated or philosophical, but it's not. If you check out your own experience when you are restless and you are discontent with your life, what's happening? Some sort of movement. Something's happening, right? And you don't even know what it is originally. I bet you that nobody here can actually pinpoint the actual movement when a thought arises. Now that's pretty good. So when you have desire, when you have the impulse to do something if you don't know actually how that arose, how it takes shape and where it goes then basically you are mindless in a certain sense. You're just being pushed along by the wind of karma and that happens throughout your life unless you get a handle on it and work with that energy and how to work with your mind.

So those of us, your parents, who were attracted to Rinpoche's teaching and to Buddhist, you're attracted for that reason because at a certain point and at a point which you know is a little bit-- we were a bit older than you are. We were in our late 20's but there was a degree of dissatisfaction which I think was more processed than your own. We had done more things and more things were over within a certain way so when the meeting of our own

inquisitiveness, you could say, and our own frustration, met with the rock like quality of this particular teaching, there was an explosion. An explosion in our own life, in our mind, which brought us here, to this particular place. And basically I think, what is important to us is that you all have some understanding of what it is that this teaching is all about and why not just what it is because anybody could spout words. Anybody could read books and anybody could repeat what somebody else says but to have a direct experience of something is quite different because when you have a direct experience then you have confidence and you have conviction. Confidence in the sense that your mind doesn't jump, doesn't bounce, doesn't bounce all over like a ball. That you actually know this, it means this and that means that ant it's not a big problem. So all of you are involved in one way or another even if you don't practice meditation. You're in the environment of it and it's not so much that I would like to push you to figure out what you're going to do in your life, it's a little early.

On the other hand, mind is like, in some sense like a sponge, it can absorb anything, practically experiences of all kinds, whether they're pleasurable or painful. Your mind absorbs those experiences and then creates impressions. Now in some ways you could say that we're all brainwashed, all of us, from the moment we are born in a human body, from the moment we learn how to walk and talk we start to become conditioned. We start to do things in a patterned way, habitual way, because our parents taught us one thing or something like that, or our school taught us one thing, or our teachers taught us one thing or our friends and then we start to repeat patterns and then after we repeat them long enough we say this is me. We say "Well, who are you anyway?" "Well, I'm so and so." That's your name. The reason you have a name is because it's yours, right, and also, you have a language which again when you were younger, some said cat, cat, and you said cat, cat. So your concepts about things and the language is a repetition, pattern. So then you know that's a cat if somebody wants to ask you what is that, you say "That's a cat."

Then more subtle habits like food and types of clothing and music and books and things like that, same thing. And they become part of the pattern. Where it actually starts to get stiff when you take all that to be something solid and it belongs to you and that's who you are -- you're the person who likes this kind of music. You're the person who likes that kind of movie, this kind of food. What we would like to communicate is that it doesn't have to be that way particularly. You don't have to get fixated on particular things and say that's who you are including Buddhist or whatever, any kind of thought like that. So basically try to keep your mind flexible without it being constantly at the mercy of impulse, that's basic meditation. That's what we call meditation. So we would like to share that kind of thing with you, so what, why? What's the point there is a feeling that we could create a world which is without aggression -- a world which is based on kindness and sympathy and a world which actually has the possibility for further and further enlightenment; what we call enlightenment. Enlightenment in this case means enlightenment, means light as opposed to dark, as opposed to depressed, aggressive and hateful. So we think it's possible and in terms of our own experience it has happened to some degree over the past 10 or 15 years. We worked hard to create what's called Vajradhatu sangha all over the world and Shambhala sun all over the world and wherever you go you will recognize that particular atmosphere. If you travel, let's say to Europe, and you went to a dharmadhatu you would know it immediately, you would also recognize the people, because of the way they

behave. And in the states if you went to one place or another you would recognize it as well and you could pinpoint it. You could say, "Yes, I know that. I know what that is. Those are our people." Our people in the sense that they have a common appreciation of things and they have a feeling that they would like to make this life brilliant and also useful to others because it is not common that people come in contact with these teachings, not very common at all. Most people are intent on protecting themselves and trying to make walls around themselves so they can say, "This is my territory and that's your territory. You stay in yours and I'll stay in mine and if you don't mess with me I won't mess with you." Fortunately, it never happens. As soon as somebody gets their territory they start to look at somebody else's territory and the wheel goes around and around and around and there's war and there's famine and there's sickness and disease and death (coughs) constantly. So the promise so to speak in all of this in our discipline hopefully is that we can create enlightened society and to make things easier for other people. Easier in the sense of not having to struggle so much with their mind. So that's all I have to say and that's about it before everybody falls asleep. So if you have anything to say, if you'd like to discuss any of that or if you have any questions about what goes on in the entire Vajradhatu world, I seem to be the resident expert on these things.

Q: {Vajra} I still don't know why . . . here as opposed to . .

VROT: This place, this is our place (inaudible)

Q: (inaudible)

V: Where would you suggest?

Q: Somewhere (inaudible)

VROT: Oh, I thought you meant this room -- (laughter). Nova Scotia, why did we have to come here; well that's the question we always. . .

No, that's one of the things we thought about for years when he first introduced the idea of moving here. Everybody was kind of, well let's say not happy. There were other stronger emotions than not happy but the way I see it now what has occurred to me since being here for two years is that this place has a couple of qualities which I think will insure the future for us and one of them is there is kind of an atmosphere here which will allow us to do more or less what we want to do more so than in other places because it's kind of -- well you know, when we first moved to Boulder it was kind of like this except for the weather. But it was very unsophisticated, kind of crude, almost like a cowboy town or something but not quite because it's a university town. In over 10 years in Boulder there got to be all those different things happening you know and a lot of it was because we put a lot into it. But there was always a kind of aggression in Boulder, a kind of, what do you call it, materialism. And when we came to this place we found the same thing happening on a certain level -- that it's very underdeveloped. It's not sophisticated like some places in the states. So in some ways that gives us a chance to create the kind of situation that we want to and to introduce things into this environment which we couldn't do in other parts. There's that and there's also lack of entertainment here and I know, well a lot more so for us than for you. You have more

entertainment than we do. But lack of entertainment is really because it makes things simple, not so complicated and if your mind is bouncing all the time on everything new thing you can pick up, every little thing you can see, what you can do, what you are we doing now, you'll never look at yourself; you have no chance. So this place is good for practicing meditation. That's my own experience since I live here and cause there's almost an ignorance quality.

Q: There's nothing else to do.

VROT: Close. (Laughter) It is true in a way. There is not that much else to do. But there's also a quality of almost numbness or dumbness here. But it's not stupid, it's not stupid. It has a lot to do with the climate; so much of it is cold, that you're indoors. Yeah. And you're not, you're not, if you were say in Boulder right now you'd be out and about, right? Something, something to attract your mind. That's another thing, I think another reason. This is a relatively obscure place in the world. A lot of people don't even know it exists. Serious. Sometimes when I travel I say I live in Halifax, Nova Scotia. "That part of Canada?" "Yeah." So I think in some ways it's also good for us because it doesn't draw a lot of attention. We do a lot of attention to ourselves in Boulder. You know, which is not so good, especially if you're trying to build anything. But in any case, you're not trapped here, you know. There's always a chance to travel and to go to different places. In fact everybody should, at some point, before you get too locked into family, and a career, etc. etc. Just take a chance to look at the world and go out and see some things.

Let's see what else; why else are we here. Here's another reason. Rinpoche has a particular kind of power to see things, the future and that power came out when he was very young, and from his look at it, this was the best place to go. So I don't know how to explain that or what to say about that but I have tremendous faith in that because of my time with him, which was a short time -- only 17 years -- I saw how he could see things. And you have to trust to a certain degree. You don't want to trust because of sort of blind faith but you want to trust also because there's something in it, some kind of truth, there's something that actually works. So, so far, so good.

Q: I was wondering if it was possible in the future if we could make more active the cadet corp, maybe in the summer too, the Shambhala summer camp, do it here.

VROT: Do it here?

Q: Do it here. I don't know about now but in the future there's going to be some need to do something up here.

VROT: I think probably sooner than later. Be great if something could happen in the winter as well. (Laughter) You could, things could be done here.

Q: Christmas break.

VROT: Maybe. You know what would also be great is to do some Purnachandra stuff, sailing. Anybody done that?

Q: I don't know about anything related to the sangha but I know that Sam West has programs sailing and all that, like he knows about all that.

VROT: Well, we have a lot of people that know about that stuff. Sailing would be very nice, and since we're surrounded by water. (Inaudible) Not only all around but from the sky -- permeated with water everywhere.

Q: I heard there's going to be a Buddhist training going on in the schools, or something like that?

VROT: Well, what I heard about this is that a couple of parents in one of the schools they had a free period and some of the Christian people said to our own, some of us, why don't you come to this prayer meeting. So one of the parents said to the principle, if you have this Christian thing, why can't you have this too. And then they said sure, why not.

(Inaudible discussion about who did it, mentioning Jill Scott.)

In any case, they started some kind of study and then there was another one I heard of recently.

Q: What grade was it?

VROT: Oh, younger ones. No not your age. No, they can't really teach religion in schools but in the free periods you know. So somebody said why don't you come to bible class.

Q: (Inaudible)