



VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN

The Path of Radiant Wisdom Intensive Training Seminar

Orcas Island, Washington

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[Path of Radiant Wisdom, Intensive Training Seminar]
[Orcas Island, Washington]

Talk two of 6
April 29, 1984

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VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN:

To the gurus and bodhisattvas and the buddhas living in the three times, to the yidams and their retinue I pay homage. It's very good to see you all again. I trust that you had a nice day. Working with one's mind is not a mechanical thing. You can't do it by a formula and you can't do it by simply reciting a mantra or simply reciting any kind of little quote that you had. However, it is good to remember certain things. Things that will bring you closer to the mind of the Buddha and the mind of the teacher and the mind of the lineage. In essence, our mind has never been separated from that. In the essential truth that mind is completely pure, therefore all dharmas are pure as well, in other words, all the expression of mind is pure as well. When you practice meditation it doesn't seem that way. At least at the beginning it appears that something is pure but we don't quite know what it is and that the expression is impure. Now that is due to certain causes and when we understand what those causes are, at least by their nature, then we don't have to become too worried about them and therefore our meditation practice becomes a very. . .[sighs] simple.

In order to put a background to what we are doing here I am going to speak about the Buddha's teaching and that, again, you have probably heard before. But in context of our practice and being here on Orcas Island in Doe Bay in Puget Sound, Washington State, there is the quality of being able to connect in some way one's past, one's present, and one's future. Now we talked last night, I believe, about past, present and future, did we not? Yeah? What did we say? What did I say? Somebody tell me. [Inaudible: Annala?]

Student: [inaudible words]

Vajra Regent: Can we have a microphone here? I know this is unexpected but [laughs] it's just a microphone.

Student: [inaudible words]

VR: Yes, though, don't worry there is one, it just takes a while to get there. Here we go.

Student: You said the past, present and future doesn't exist. Future is our projection, therefore doesn't exist. Present is moment to moment therefore it's

VR: -not, doesn't exist

Student: -doesn't exist, cannot be caught

VR: -right. Past?

Student: -and past is just memory.

VR: So that is kind of like basic thinking, basic view of how to practice meditation, basic how you hold your body. Past is memory. Present cannot be hold onto because it soon turns into the future. And the future only exists as a projection, so therefore we have a rather complete situation. And when you sit that way it's almost like you might get in touch with the wind and the water and the sky and the clouds. You might see your thoughts as clouds, or your thoughts as rain or wind. You might become liberated on the spot [laughter]. Anyway what was I talking about? [inaudible: what did I?] What did I start off talking about there? I seem to have forgotten.

Student: [inaudible: essential truth?]

VR: Hm?

Student: [inaudible: essential truth?]

VR: Ah? [inaudible portion] Ah, pure mind, impure mind, thank you. Even though it is not, ah, will not liberate you to memorize slogans or try to repeat formulas, still it is good in order to train your mind to remember certain essential teachings of the Buddha, because basically speaking in our age, this particular age, which is quickly coming to an end, don't be paranoid [laughter]. You will have your own understanding of that. That in this particular age which is called the dark age in terms of in the Buddhist cosmology there are four kalpas, the same as in the Hindu cosmology actually. There's a golden age, there's and iron age, there's a [inaudible muttering] dark age and there are four in any case. Huh?

Student: Bronze?

VR: No, no, not bronze [laughter] no, no, not bronze, not bronze, no. Well old age [laughter] [inaudible: lives on?] Well this is it, this is old age. Anyway, in terms of the cycle of how your mind works, also it connects to the cosmology of this universe. There's a beginning, middle and end of everything. And we ourselves are on the end cycle. That doesn't mean in our lifetime we will see the dissolution of this particular universe, but it is on this cycle of teaching that the present Buddha, the Shakyamuni Buddha appeared over two-thousand, five hundred years ago to teach the dharma to the dark age. In previous ages there was no dharma, and before that there was splendid dharma where people didn't have to talk.

Now we have to talk. And that's why I'm doing this. And that's why you're doing this. So in order to connect with Buddha's mind, in other words, in order to connect with your own mind of enlightenment it is necessary to remember certain things because we are ourselves working with concepts. Last night we talked about the precious human birth. And in precious human birth there's a lot of concept involved because of this particular materialistic age which is called the dark age, and has been called that for a long time, there's a waning of dharmic attitude. There's a heaviness and an addiction to material comfort which has spread over this particular planet and this time. That's why we find everybody doing their bang bang on everybody else, you know? Trying to steal somebody's property, trying to hold onto their own property.

When we look around at this world right now, take a look. You know, just a casual reading of Time Magazine, which, even though we would not accept that as the truth, still there's something going on, right? People are reporting their discursive thoughts all over the place [laughter] ah. When the Buddha was born, this particular Buddha of this age, and his, this is, of this particular age I think he is the fourth, is it or the third?

Student: I think it's the fourth.

VR: I think the fourth, of this kalyuga, or the dark age, he's the fourth Buddha of this age came to teach some essential teachings for those who had been stricken by materialism and overwhelmed by aggression. And he taught essentially how to view things as they are and how to do it without creating further aggression. And he taught the simple dharma in the language that human beings, like ourselves, can understand. And the first thing that happened when the Buddha attained enlightenment . . . well first of all how he attained enlightenment you should remember, he didn't move. That's

instruction for tomorrow. Of course, he didn't move, not from the point of view of this, you know [straightens posture?] here come the maras I got to brace up for deception, I have to brace up for my own personal . . . he would have never attained enlightenment that way. He didn't move because he took his seat in a proper way, in a proper place at a proper time and because his motivation was to find out exactly what it is that is causing this pain.

So, the first teaching of the Buddha. When he attained enlightenment he said to his first students, there are four truths and the first truth is this, and that all conditioned existence is suffering. All conditioned existence is suffering. Anything that is the combination of things is bound to decay and therefore once the decaying process happens is bound to experience the result of that decaying process which is pain, suffering, old age and death. And he said, as human beings, that is the nature of existence. That is the first noble truth.

This is one of my famous quotes so . . . here it comes. The Buddha did not say that there was the first . . . ignoble truth. He didn't say it was the first lie. He said it was the first noble truth. That all conditioned experience is bound by pain. That's the nature of conditioned existence. You and I, we're born into this realm of humans, and we think a certain way because of our conditioned existence. In other words, there's a certain kind of ignorance that comes along with birth. When you are born, ignorance is already there because you forgot what happened before. If you remembered what happened before then you would be born a buddha. You would remember. And therefore from the first day you talked, first day you spoke, you would say, om ah hum, or something like that [laughter]. In other words you would enlighten people just from the first day you spoke. But even this particular buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, had to go through the experience of birth, sickness, old age and death. He went out of his palace and saw those things happening. He decided to meditate he saw, well, this isn't good enough.

In order to practice meditation properly, it is necessary for us to have some background. Otherwise we'll just be doing it for our own purposes. In other words, if you would like to relieve yourself from suffering, you have to do a little bit more than just practice meditation in order to relieve yourself from suffering. You have to have some background. The background is this - the Buddha taught that all conditioned existence is marked by suffering. And that suffering has a cause. And its cause primarily is ignorance, that is to say, ignorance of conditioned existence. And that cause can be liberated. And it can be liberated through practice. Those are what's called the four noble truths. Practice he called the eight-fold path, noble eight-fold path. In other words, how to speak, how to walk, how to eat, how to live, all the rest of it.

But the basic thing that we should be working with here in our mandala, in our practice environment, is that working on the fact that conditioned existence is not pleasant. Even though it is really lovely here in Orcas Island and the sun shines luckily for us but maybe the weather's changing, I hear some winds out there. Even so, we sit in the meditation hall, what are we doing? [inaudible: So well?] I think maybe I should jog down, I saw somebody, who was jogging down today when I passed in the car? One of you . . . and somebody's riding a boat, paddling about out here. You know it's kind of like, maybe there's something in this phenomenal world that I can get off on. Feel good about. Feel decent, healthy, great. Yes, that's all possible when you understand the four noble truths, that is to say that conditioned existence is not permanent. And therefore there's an experience of suffering.

And suffering itself is the experience of egolessness, that is to say, that there is no ego prompting you to suffer as such. There are simply patterns, and those patterns exist in this world of ours. There are patterns. And patterns exist, as far as the Buddhist teaching goes, in terms of three basic expressions. Passion, aggression and ignorance. Passion is something that exists as a pattern of holding on to anything that feels pleasing. Aggression exists as a pattern that is dispelling anything that feels

threatening. And ignorance is ignoring both of those. In terms of our particular world and what we do, passion is the most prominent thing.

So we begin by examining conditioned existence. What is it like to be a human being? What do we experience as humans? We experience body, speech and mind. We experience body as a dream, we experience speech as confusion, and we experience mind as nothing at all. So basically unless we invent something, nothing happens. On the other hand, when we invent something we feel energized, we feel connected, we feel like something's happening. On the other hand, when we feel like something's happening we have some hope that the future will be different than what it is now.

Buddha taught that there are three marks of existence, in other words, existence is marked by these qualities. First is egolessness, that is to say that existence itself has no basis. Your existence, whomever you are, is a haphazard occurrence due to factors which join themselves at a particular point. And that existence itself is painful because it is impermanent. See the development of memory is purely the repetition of a pattern. When you repeat a pattern due to ignorance you begin to think that that pattern is basically who you are. And then you say, well this is who I am. That's me. The only problem with that is suffering. When me doesn't stay the same from one moment to the other. So egolessness means that there's no basis. Impermanence means that whatever basis that is created is underoded [?] by itself, disappears by itself because it has no substance, and that because of that there is pain. So this is really basic teaching.

And there's something that you should remember, something you should keep in mind when you meditate, when your mind goes one way or the other and you think you had a good experience or a bad experience. When you decide to criticize those around you or criticize yourself, you should remember that all conditioned existence is marked by egolessness, impermanence and pain. So when you have that firmly fixed in your mind then your meditation practice becomes very fluid and very solid. Solid in the sense that it's ongoing and you don't get tricked by the occasional emotional upheavals which cause you to think that you are a somebody.

All in all, to practice meditation means to discover the fundamental truth. All dharmas have a cause and that cause was taught by the Tathagatha to be empty of any self nature. Om Ye Dharma Hetu-Prabhava Hetum Tesam Tathagatah Hyavadat Tesam Ca Yo Nirodha. Om Ye Dharma Hetu-Prabhava. All dharmas have a cause. Hetum Tesam Tathagatah. That cause was taught by the Tathagata. Hyavadat Tesam Ca Yo Nirodha. That the cause itself has no origin. All dharmas have a cause and the cause has no origin. That was taught by the Tathagata. So that's the way you should practice meditation. Even though things arise in your mind, you should not consider them to be permanent. You should not consider them to have any identification with a self and you should see all suffering as empty. In that way, you might understand cause and effect, that is to say, you might refrain from indulging in evil thoughts and actions, and you might take on a particular behavior, that is to say, dharmic one, which is that which refrains from all evil thoughts and actions.

Cause and effect is the Buddha's way of teaching us how to meditate. When you practice meditation, my dear friends, if something goes wrong, what do you do? You go back to the technique. If you can't go back to the technique then what do you do? Complain. To yourself and to the shrine and to the people around you and saying, son of a bitch told me the wrong thing. Cause and effect is a, the Buddha's way of teaching us how to meditate. How to meditate properly. According to that teaching, every action that arises arises first mentally then in speech, in other words intellectually, then in body, in other words environmentally. When you practice meditation you should see that in mind and environment, mind is a communication and environment are all an inseparable unity. So if you are practicing meditation and you think somebody next to you is getting in your way, or somebody in front of you is creating bad thought patterns

for you [laughter] etcetera, etcetera, you should start to think that after all cause and effect is the complete understanding of how your mind works. If you generate something it will have its result.

So the basic teaching is do not generate anything. How to do that? Have a sense of humor. Relax with your body in an upright position and let the mind go. If you have thoughts, just regard them as thoughts. If you have sensations, let them be as they are. Basically mind is not separate from the Buddha. Therefore there is no reason to complain. If we have complaints there is no reason to complain about them. So then we have an unending stream of meditative awareness which is so good and so simple. So that in a nutshell is the basic teaching of the Buddha. If you have any questions, please ask them.

Question: Fearlessness, sir? [laughter]

Vajra Regent: Fearlessness comes from not being duped by your own mind. In other words, if you think to yourself, I want that. Not being taken in by that. That's a purely karmic upheaval. I want that. Once you get it what are you going to do with it? It's like buying a new coat, you say hey, that's lovely. Look in the mirror, it's great. Two weeks later, huh? Egolessness, impermanence and suffering. When you look at it two weeks later you think to yourself, [sighs], could've got the other one [laughter]. Or you thought . . . or you think to yourself, well, I want to get the other one later, which will cause you pain, you see. Fearlessness is a, actually jumping on your first thought. When you have a first thought in meditation practice, jump on it and dissolve it without paying attention to it. In other words, let's say you're following, going out with your breath, breath is dissolving into space and maybe for one minute at best you don't have any thoughts or any concern about yourself. And suddenly a thought comes in, right? A thought comes in, I am doing this. And then you jump on that as something special. Not because you want to because as soon as you jump on it, you think to yourself, I shouldn't jump on this, this is not special, and you begin to complicate your life.

The best way is to let it go. To be fearless is to let it go, not hang onto it. Don't play games with yourself. If you do, don't be surprised and don't be upset. Just let it go on, because that game will empty itself out [snaps fingers] and you will still be practicing meditation in any case. After that game finishes, there will be a gap, you know, empty space, something else will come up. Fearlessness is not making a big deal out of oneself. Smile. Thank you. [laughter] That's good. Smile, big one [laughter]. This lineage we should contemplate the moment of death. Every minute that we are alive we should think, death comes at any moment, therefore I should not be sloppy. That's what makes you smile. That's what makes you not too attached to things of this life. Use your sense of humor. [Say?] Oh, I like this very much, whoo, bingo. [inaudible] devastated. Hmm, husband, child, dead. Takes a real simple and ordinary and relaxed way of dealing with your mind in order to understand suffering as the basic nature of conditioned existence. Cause of suffering to be attached to this life in terms of passion, aggression, ignorance, and relief from that is letting off all concern, opening up completely and practicing the bodhisattva's way, Buddha's teaching as the path. This four noble truths, that's how to be fearless.

You can do that very simply by not buying into your discursive thoughts. And then later on you can do it very simply by not making your emotions into a fancy. I must admit, it's a rather boring life. As you can see I'm completely bored. [laughter] But having good old time talking to you. So [laughter] don't be too tight, don't be too loose, keep your body upright, let the breath go out, let it dissolve. Whatever comes back, don't take it personally. Let the breath go out, let it dissolve. Whatever comes back, don't take it personally. When you have thoughts of being somebody or other and you think those are in conflict with your meditation practice, let them go out and if they

come back, don't take it personally. So, in other words, you understand how to work with the basic dharmas that the buddha has taught. You want to say something else? You can. [Microphoneski?]

Q: Sometimes I, sometimes it seems clear in terms of things being solid. Sometimes it seems quite floaty, and [I think?] thing go, very much like the world is floating and I keep waiting-

VR: -let it float

Q: -I keep waiting for

VR: -let it float

Q: -the rock-like quality

VR: - eh, listen, it's like a cloud in a way. Cloud is floating through the sky so you take that appearances to be real, but eventually the cloud will disperse into the elements and what you thought to be real will have disappeared. So if you are waiting for it to come down to Earth it will in the form of rain. But then it won't be the same as what you thought before.

Q: I was waiting for it to come down to Earth

VR: Oh yes, well, wait without looking for anything. If you want to wait properly than practice meditation. That means waiting without looking or without expecting. Sounds good, but hard to do. Sounds easy; difficult to do. You have to keep your body really straight. As if you were a Buddha. Talky talky? No more? Talky talky.

Question: I was wondering if you could clarify the role of suffering with creation or creativity

VR: -Oh, great! Great idea, that's fantastic. Creativity is suffering manifest. That's what Buddha taught. That's what keeps us bound to conditioned existence because we think we can create something. We have an egotistical thought. It arises and we say [gasps] I can, I can do this. I mean that's very complicated. But the very basic one is just like a [gasp]. Like an in breath [inahles]. Say I. What we do is like, we do it this way [inhales, exhales] enough. Yeah. Creativity is egotistical, fundamentally. In terms of the Buddha's teaching there is no creator. And there is no fundamental cause. Our problem is that we would like to accomplish something in our lives and therefore we create a pattern and that pattern continues with us as we go along. And we repeat it and we cause ourselves an awful lot of hassle. Of course, to understand the undoing of that takes a lot of effort.

Q; Ok, I have one other thing that relates with that, and that is evolution, is that like a naive view of mind as a

VR: -no I think it's more like, it's a human view of mind. It's not naive. It's just a human view. According to the sutras and teachings of the Buddha, there are, how many kinds of birth? Come on, you're supposed to know. Five?

Student: Five

VR: -Five, there are five. Egg, womb, spontaneous, [inaudible], moisture, there are various different kinds of birth. Ours is human, so we think this is what is. We are born from our mother's womb and this is what we say this is existence. But there are other beings aside from ourselves who have existed as long as there is this one, this kind of existence. They weren't born in the same way, they have different thoughts. According to the Buddhist teaching in the human realm it is possible to release the thought process because there's so much passion, there's so much desire. In the other realms, there's less desire. For instance you go to an animal, your desire is to eat and to fuck and to sleep. If you are a human being, you think.

Well, [laughter] huh, not only along with the other three, but so intertwined that you think sophisticated thoughts. In God realm you don't think, you just dwell on your own mind. In the asura realm you become acutely paranoid of everything. In the animal realm you just become hounded by that which eats you and that which you eat. In the hungry ghost realm you worry about what's coming next, therefore you're always thinking about how to inhabit the world and how to get something out of it. And in the hell realm you can't think at all, you're just completely frozen or burning. So this kind of thing that happens in people's minds. In the human realm there's a gap because you think occasionally I wish I could fall in love. In no other realm does that happen. You see. So that's how we connect ourselves with the dharma and once we connect ourselves with the dharma the Buddha says, nice but listen, conditioned existence is marked by suffering, and suffering has a cause, that is to say, attachment to conditioned existence, but that cause itself can be liberated by seeing the ultimate truth, and to see it one should practice the dharma and therefore it will be resolved.

So that's what we have. Now these are thoughts that you should not remember nor should you forget. I take it that you have heard these before most of you, and those of you who haven't I apologize if I haven't said them clearly enough. Let them be a background of your meditation practice. In other words, when you try and stay on the dot, keep it together, understand that the background is the Buddha's breath on your neck. That you can't fool yourself to think that even though you practice meditation, you will be saved from anything at all. And that way let your mind roam freely, let it be like an antelope, like a tiger, like a mountain lion, like a garuda. Let it be like a big fish. Let it be like a butterfly. Let your mind do what it will and remember that the Buddha taught there's no reason to attach yourself to any experience whatsoever. We'll talk more about this tomorrow. I should hope that your practice remains constant after all you came all the way here to Orcas Island to do this and to do this you should do it simply, and don't make a big deal out of it. Just come to the meditation hall tomorrow and practice and if you get bored, if you get irritated, if you get opinionated, if you get horny, if you get hungry, if you get stupid and if you get smart, if you get insightful, if you get spaced-out, consider that all to be the cause of conditioned and the result of conditioned existence. That has nothing to do with Buddha's mind. None of it. Buddha's mind has no second thought. It has no recollection of the past, it has no dwelling in the present, no expectation of the future. It is clear, crystal-like mind.

Actually it's very simple. It's not based on anything, therefore it doesn't have anything to produce. Now, I understand that those of you who have not practiced a lot will consider this to be a mystical task. I will also understand that those of you who are practicing a little bit will consider it to be a menial task [laughter] and I also understand that those of you who have practiced a lot will consider it to be a fantasy [laughter]. In any case, I take very great pride in teaching this tonight. Teaching of the Buddha, four noble truths which he taught first to his own students, and I have the good fortune to be in his lineage to teach you tonight. So please let it just drift through your mind like clouds in the sky. Keep your body straight. Don't pay too much attention to your thoughts. Let your breath flow naturally, and feel some sense of gratitude for being here. Thank you very much and I will see you tomorrow.

