



VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN

The Path of Radiant Wisdom Intensive Training Seminar

Orcas Island, Washington

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VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN
[Path of Radiant Wisdom, Intensive Training Seminar]
[Orcas Island, Washington]

Talk five of 6
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VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN:

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. We are continuing with our seminar, Path of Radiant Wisdom. According to the teachings of the Kagyü lineage and especially according to the teachings of the root guru, Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, and his root guru, Jamgon Kongtrul of Sechen, that in order to understand the path completely and in order not to make mistakes it is necessary to walk slowly and be aware of what you're doing. In terms of our time together here, we are trying to incorporate those teachings into a very short period of time. But at the same time it is said that in the moment that it takes to strike a match one experiences the complete ultimate wisdom. You like that? [laughter] But in order not to deceive ourselves and in order to follow the path that has been taught by the buddhas of the past and the gurus and their disciples, it is important for us to realize that we should go step by step so that we don't get ahead of ourselves.

Traditionally, the path has been described of consisting of three yanas, or, yana means vehicle, three vehicles and the first being the hinayana, that is to say, the path of renunciation. And the mahayana, that is the path of compassion. And the vajrayana, which is the path of skillful means. So in order for us to put those in perspective, we should relate to our meditation practice. That is to say what we practice here is shamatha, basic mindfulness. When you practice mindfulness you have the first experience is the discovery of being settled and being at home with one's self. That is the first experience one has.

And the second experience, second meaning second phase of one's experience, is that one's sense of being settled with oneself begins to dissolve and we begin to feel connected with the environment in a way that we haven't been before. And that connection with the environment is basically the fact that we loosen our grip, so to speak, on being a spiritual person. Which is a good thing to do but it's not something you should do consciously, not something that you should have any intention to do. It just happens organically through your practice.

And you practice shamatha. You have to pay attention to the discipline, the technique, so that the technique becomes perfected in itself. But once the technique starts to take hold of your meditation practice, in other words, once you begin to become easy with the technique then the technique itself begins to dissolve into space and then you begin to feel a sense of freedom and a sense of ventilation that you have not felt before. And that ventilation is not based on anything in particular. It's kind of, you might say, the natural freedom of your own mind.

Previously you have been trying to get your mind into a good working discipline, which we must do because of habitual patterns, we talked about it. Once you have seen that habitual patterns are nothing more than patterns then you begin to see that mind patterns itself, constantly. When you're sitting practicing meditation a thought will arise about somebody you knew in the past and that will evoke a memory about something in the past and that will evoke an expectation of something in the future, and you will see that that all is a pattern, especially if you just keep a good posture, don't hang onto any kind of expectation, you will notice that patterning is what happens in your mind. We pattern our existence constantly. But real freedom starts to happen when you realize that that patterning has no origin. Because we think that it begins somewhere, therefore we look for the beginning. And when we look for the beginning we get frustrated because there isn't any, and therefore we start to think that we have made a mistake. We start to think that our life is confused and we start to look for another pattern. We start to invent patterns. We start to make the whole thing into what's called the vicious cycle of samsara. Constantly inventing a pattern because we cannot discover any origin.

Now, luckily for us the Buddha, in his infinite compassion, taught the essential teaching which is called the mahayana, or the great vehicle. Now the mahayana and the

vajrayana are not separate. They are the same. In fact, the hinayana, the mahayana and the vajrayana are not separate. They are simply stages of the path. Stages of unfolding which happens to us. When we begin to practice our mind unfolds like one of those Walt Disney slow motion flowers. One of those old pictures that they used to do how spring happened. You know. There was a bud and suddenly the bud became a little flower and then it opened completely and then the petals fell off and [just?] fall and then...[laughter]. The same way with our practice what happens is the bud is there sort of there bursting slightly and that's the hinayana stage where you have to keep a tight reign on your mind and then suddenly there's a sense of opening, the sunshine and petals open and begin to blossom.

So tonight I would like to talk about that, that blossoming process, which is the mahayana teaching. But basically we could become confused even in the Buddhist tradition in thinking that what we have achieved through our sitting practice is all that we have to do. In other words if you get familiar with the technique and you feel comfortable in your sitting practice you think, "aha, I'm cured". It's happened. I feel better. As you heard the other night, meeting a spiritual friend makes a little bit of difference in that. The analogy of a physician is very important there as Mr. Milani was talking about the other night. That the spiritual friend is like a physician, but if any of you have ever had an examination you realize that when you are sick you want to go to the doctor. When you feel better you don't. Because there's a slight sense of embarrassment because the doctor has seen you sick and now you feel better and you don't want to go back and expose anything else. You think to yourself well I am better, there's not point in going back. But it is necessary to go back.

In order to uncover any kind of clinging to this existence that you have and therefore it is necessary to...what kind of pose is that? Sit up. It is necessary to go back and expose it again, not from the point of view of being a masochist particularly, or to force yourself into an embarrassing situation, but because if you have any kind of hesitation or doubt about preceding on the path, the spiritual friend acts as a mirror and a clear mirror. Because he or she has practiced and accomplished their meditation they can reflect your own hesitation and doubt. And that kind of experience is very essential. Otherwise you will still be nurturing some sense of enlightenment or freedom for yourself. And if you nurture that for yourself it is not complete enlightenment. Because as long as there are others who are not enlightened, then your enlightenment for yourself will not be genuine.

And so seeing the spiritual friend is like seeing your own mind, your own reflection. Because the spiritual friend has accomplished the good practice, he or she can reflect. Because there is nothing disturbing their mind they can reflect what occurs in your mind. So you must see the spiritual friend and you must make a relationship with the spiritual friend. Otherwise you will be clinging to freedom as an individual accomplishment. And as the Buddha taught, if you cling to freedom as the individual accomplishment it is not true freedom. It is simply, it's almost like, like freezing a corpse, or freezing the, the, you know, how, what is the, like when they would freeze somebody and wake them up?

STUDENTS: Cryogenics.

VAJRA REGENT: Oh, yeah, yeah, that kind of thing. It doesn't work. [laughter] It's like you'd like to suspend your experience and that is what happens, my dear friends, when you practice meditation when you actually catch on to the technique you would like to freeze that experience. And so you can keep it going. Right? But, luckily again for us, the Buddha taught that there is a vast way, a bigger picture altogether than your own individual enlightenment or liberation. And that is what's called the birth of bodhichitta, the birth of the thought of enlightenment for the benefit of others. When it

occurs to you that you might feel good about what you're doing, but others might feel bad. And when it occurs to you that even if you feel good and other feel bad then you can't feel really good, then some sort of compassion begins to be born in you. Some sort of sense of tenderness and gentleness and openness to the whole world is born in you because you start to leave the ego territory altogether. At a certain point you begin to realize that ego is not simply your discursive thoughts but there's something else going on to. There's a clinging and fixation not only to this life, but to the future. Clinging to the future. In other words, I would like this to go on. I would like this enlightenment or this feeling to go on. And that has the quality of exclusion. Because you would not like any more neurotic thoughts to come in. No more. No more. [laughter] Not liked to be disturbed by anybody's sneezing, anybody's coughing. Not be disturbed by anybody's aggression, passion, ignorance, because you found something good, you want to hold on to it. But the compassionate one's have taught that at that point it is necessary to raise oneself up and open oneself to the world.

The world, in this case, is beyond your projection. The world is the suffering of sentient beings. Just as you have suffered, sentient beings are suffering continually. Not coming in contact with the holy dharma, not meeting a spiritual friend, they have no way to go. They drown in an ocean of neurosis. They drown in an ocean of passion. They drown in an ocean of aggression. They are helpless and have nowhere to turn. At that point if you don't feel some sympathy, then your meditation practice should be opened up. In other words, you are being too tight.

The same thing happens in terms of your technique. When you practice shamatha and you can actually stay with the breath, go out with it and have the dissolve happen and you feel at home with yourself and perfectly stable, even though there are occasional little flurries of fantasy, you don't pay attention to them, you don't think it's that important. Even though that happens, there is still a boundary. The boundary itself is your technique, that is to say, you are bound by your technique. So in order to loosen up so that you don't become too fixated on being a spiritual person and a meditator, you should let the thoughts roam freely in the space of your mind and come back to the breath in a simple fashion. That means to say that you no longer exclude whatever occurs in your mind as being the enemy or the friend. You don't include it as a friend and exclude it as the enemy. You allow it to occur simply and genuinely and by doing that you might lose a little bit of the precision but you gain a little bit of the space.

Now I am not telling you this so that when you practice meditation tomorrow I want you to lose precision and gain space. I hope you understand. What I'm saying is that there is a natural occurrence that once you begin to feel settled you will also begin to feel no ground. That is to say that at a certain point your technique itself will not be the ground for you and you will have to just look at your own mind. And when you do, the instruction is to allow it to be what it is and come back to the basic technique. And that way you begin to feel the edge of things. You feel the edge of your thoughts. You feel the edge of your emotions. You feel the edge of the space that you're sitting in. And also you begin to feel the quality of the edge and the outside and those things becoming fuzzy. In other words, you feel good and suddenly you feel anxious, and that anxiousness becomes fuzzy. It's not yours because you already understand that these thoughts are just thoughts and even if they're emotions they're just thoughts anyway, exaggerated thoughts.

But what happens after that? Nothing happens after that. You can't see any other particular thing going on. Except you can feel something. You can feel that sense of spaciousness where when your breath goes out and your thoughts go with it, as the breath goes out and a thought arises or emotion comes to the edge of itself it would like to fall off into space but there's nothing to fall off into. It just has a very tenuous feeling. So when you practice it's kind of like ventilation and tenuousness. Some sense of being here but not here. That happens. At that point you wonder where is the anchor? How

can I keep myself bound so I don't fly off into space? Well the anchor is connecting to the spiritual friend and following the instructions.

Now the instructions of the spiritual friend at that point is to develop compassion for the benefit of all beings. To develop that and deepen that sense of feeling of respect that you have developed for yourself. To project that out to others. Now we have the good fortune to be able to practice meditation here on Orcas Island for this period of time. But when you think of sentient beings, beings like ourselves who have not even heard one word of the dharma, what can you do? What is your thought? Your thought should be there is one thing I can do and that is I can attain enlightenment for their benefit. To attain enlightenment, what does that mean? It does not mean that you have a solitary experience. It does not mean that you will have something for, at, by yourself for yourself and therefore give it to somebody else. That is not the meaning of attaining enlightenment, or at least that's not the image. So as far as the meaning goes, I'm not so sure.

But I am sure that we all have a particular image of attaining enlightenment and that is this kind of obliterating our mind and letting it dissolve into some kind of heavenly realm. And maybe we have it dissolving into no heavenly realm, but still whatever idea we have that's not right. [laughter] And it's not the idea anyway. The basic idea of attaining enlightenment is this: that enlightenment is the expression of compassion and that is the total idea. Now the expression of compassion can be likened to the sun which shines no matter what else is happening. Now there may be clouds, and there may be thunderstorms and there may be occasional space shuttles. But the sun is still shining. So attaining enlightenment is like radiating compassion three hundred and sixty degrees. Because the center that is the sun itself has no thought of itself. And therefore it radiates. Just like our own sun in the sky is not thinking about whether or not it should be the sun. In the same way, attaining enlightenment is precisely that way. There's no thought about whether or not it should be, it just simply radiates.

Now, according to the tradition, when one feels, when a student feels, a refugee, a student of the dharma feels a loss of ground, a loss of connection, then that is the time that they should understand the true meaning of compassion and connect thoroughly to the mahayana teaching. Because up to that point there is still the thought of self. Even in the hinayana teaching there is still the thought of self. Enlightenment for one's self. Liberation for one's self. But when one feels in one's practice that there is no ground, and that nothing helps then we should let go and open our minds completely and feel the very mind of the Buddha. That is called the bodhichitta. Bodhichitta means, bodhi means enlightenment and chitta means heart or mind, or the heart or mind of enlightenment occurs when there is no alternative except compassion. There is no alternative except radiation, going out. Expanding and expanding fully and completely.

Now that happens in your meditation practice. If you do shamatha properly, at some point your basic experience will naturally expand and you become aware of the environment. The environment means the space around you, above, below, behind, in front, three hundred and sixty degrees. Rinpoche used to call it panoramic awareness. You begin to feel aware of totality and at the same time your thoughts occur, but they don't occur from the point of view of having to subdue them or to ride on them or to throw them out. They just sort of go out and become like raindrops on rock.

At that point you begin to feel that there's somebody else beside yourselves doing this. Human beings. Not only that, you begin to feel the existence of other beings beside yourselves. The hell realm beings, jealous gods, animal realm beings. You begin to feel that there are so many beings that are just wandering, drifting, they have never felt a raindrop on a rock as their own mind. They have never felt the freedom that you have felt. So therefore you have to develop compassion. You have to start to think, ah, this is it. If I cling to my own satisfaction this is not truly the Buddha's mind, this is not

truly how to practice meditation. In other words, you must abandon self-deception altogether and the basic self-deception you must abandon is your own freedom.

However, it is said that one should attain enlightenment because that is the supreme benefit. So how is it that you abandon your own freedom and attain enlightenment? By thinking this way. All sentient beings, all beings from beginningless time have been my mother. When you think of your mother, think of someone, whether or not you like your mother is not important, but what is important to think that you are sitting here because of her. When you had no way to feed yourself, to survive at all, your mother did that for you. And in the course of lifetime we have all been each other's mother one time or other. So think of it that way. Look at all sentient beings as your mother. Sometime or other, somebody has helped you survive. It is not simply, by the way, a Buddhist superstitious thought. It has to do with what we were talking about about cause and effect. That cause and effect is the basic teaching of the Buddha and that being, every sentient being being your mother makes perfect sense. Sometime or other it happened that way. You should think that way and you should understand it. Of course understand it from your own experience, don't think of it mentally so much, you know. Say, every sentient being has been my mother therefore you should call them once a month, at least [laughter]. It's not exactly the point.

The point is that the feeling that you have when you remember the kindness of others, the feeling that you have when you remember the suffering of others, that somebody had to suffer, somebody had to go through pain for you to exist. For you to be here right now somebody had to go through pain. So, thinking that way evolves you into what is called the immaculate bodhichitta, the thought of enlightenment. Therefore you think to yourself if that is the case, if somebody had to do that for me then I should do something while I have the time, I should do something meaningful. What is the meaningful thing you should do? You should attain enlightenment for their benefit. How to do that? Serve sentient beings without exception. Considering all of them to be your mother do not hate anybody, don't think ill of anybody. Even if they harm you, even if they try to kill you, think that is my mother. And I'm sure some of us have thought that before [laughter].

But in any case you should understand that all sentient beings are afflicted with a particular disease includes ourselves. The, that disease is like [heh?], it's like catching a flu and then getting pneumonia. Catching the flu is like fixation. And pneumonia is like conflicting emotions. First you fixate and because you fixate then you make a big deal out of it. Those are the two diseases of samsara. So when you look at sentient beings, if they're evil, have they done bad things to you, even if they have done slightly bad things, you know, slightly bad, and you want to think badly of them, do not. Remember that all of us, those of us who are not completely awakened and who still cling to this life and still cling to our own salvation are partaking of the same disease. Fixation, conflicting emotions.

You fixate when things don't go well for you. And when you fixate then you invent a story, and that's how the wheel turns. And that's how the waterwheel of samsara produces itself again and again. But by thinking, this person is just like, this person has been caught by fixation, conflicting emotions. And if there were some dharma in their life then they could be liberated. By thinking that way, you begin to develop sense of kindness and goodness for others. You begin to develop the excellent heart of enlightenment, of the bodhichitta. Basically it's like thin glass. A pebble dropped on thin glass. Doesn't break it but makes a splinter. That's the way you can relate to it. There's a little splinter in your heart when you actually feel some sympathy for somebody else other than yourself.

Now we are not talking about Christian charity and heaven [forbid?] [laughter]. Christian charity is simply getting yourself to heaven, and to tell you the truth, I myself am not interested in getting there. Although the streets may be paved with gold, it is

said in the Buddhist teaching that heaven only lasts for so long [laughter]. And I'm sure you know that in your own experience, that heaven only lasts for so long and it changes into something else. And sometimes right into hell. But however, you must think that every sentient being is not only your mother but the notion of your mother is also your benefactor. The one who has helped you, who has made you see things as they are. That means that when you feel angry at someone else. When you feel jealous of someone else. When you feel pride because you feel better than someone else. When you feel lust, passion, or when you feel any of that so-called negative emotion, you must think, at that very moment you must think, aha, that is the way I can experience compassion. Because the other person is giving you a chance to practice. This is true. That somebody else is giving you a chance to empty out your mind and steady your mind. Because they seemingly have presented to you the negativity that you would like to get rid of, throw out. But at the same time, if you are sharp enough and if you have enough heart for it, you will notice that they are presenting not only the negativity but also the immaculate bodhichitta, the thought of enlightenment. You think to yourself, ah, now I can practice, now I can really practice.

When you do your sitting meditation it's for yourself. In the post-meditation when you relate to other people, it can't be solely for yourself. Now you might ask, who are these other people and what are they doing? [laughter] According to the ultimate teaching there are no other people and they're not doing anything [laughter]. But, on the other hand, it appears to your mind that there is somebody else and they are doing something to you. Is that untrue? Am I making this up? Doesn't it appear that somebody's doing something to you? Occasionally it appears that nobody is doing anything to you but that's simply because you're not aware of it [laughter]. And occasionally it appears to you that you are doing something for them, and that's simply because you're not aware of it. But for the most part, dealing with your own mind projection is actually opening your heart, feeling the other.

Now, according to the Buddhist teaching, there's no other and no self. The self is eliminated in terms of conceptualization by practicing shamatha. The other is eliminated by practicing compassion. Eliminated doesn't mean [makes a sharp blowing sound] you know, bang, no other. Means that the notion of other, the notion or the conceptual notion of other dissolves. And then you begin to feel the actual communication of mind to mind. Oneself to another. Strictly speaking, there is no other. Strictly speaking, there is no self. But there is the movement of the mind and we should be aware of that, so that when we train our mind in the appropriate way, we generate compassion for the benefit of others. Therefore we begin to see the reality of what other is. You can't do it any other way. If you try to do it like the scientists do, they try to make other into an experiment. You try and do it like philosophers do. They try to make other into treatise. You try to do it like a businessman does. They try to do, to make other in terms of a profit or a deal. You try to do it like a politician and other becomes power. You try to do it like a religious person and other becomes a deity. But we are Buddhists and we should understand that there is nothing out there as long as there's nothing in there. It's the same. What's here is what's there.

So all of that sounds very good but on the other hand, I feel this and I feel that. Well, accordingly the Buddha has taught and has presented to us the aspiration and perseverance of the bodhisattva path. Once you feel any kind of a sympathy, should go with that. That's why I was talking about your meditation practice. Once your technique begins to become fuzzy and dissolve and you can't tell the boundary between your thoughts and the space, then hold to that, look at that, because that's where your heart is. That's where your intention is. You being to feel what the buddhas have taught for so long, that there is no ego whatsoever. Up to this time you have been building very gently your little practice of meditation, which is good. But at a certain point your little practice of meditation will have no consequence to your mind and at that point you

will wonder what you are doing. And when you wonder what you are doing then you should let go and let the breath go out and dissolve and come back.

You feel not only the presence of your own seat but you feel the presence of the space around you. That's how you begin to learn how to relate to other people. How to recognize others as not separate from yourself. You feel inspired. You feel tired. You feel like I can't do this again. And yet you feel somewhat excited about the fact that you can really make a communication. At that point it doesn't matter whether it's yourself or the other or whether either exists, it's not even important. Then you should, as is said by Lord Gampopa, seize firmly that thought of enlightenment, that which will benefit all beings by which you can cross over this ocean of samsara and reach the other shore. That is to say, you can play in the Buddha's park. There's a nice big park, it's a wonderful place. There are trees with ruby flowers and grass made of emeralds. Trees are all the bark is teak and the sun is gold and the moon is silver. The stars are crystal [recording cuts out] all sentient beings. You can't get there without them.

Imagine you got there and there's nobody there but yourself [laughter] and you look around you say, ah, what a wonder. And you look around and say, ah, what a ... nobody to talk to [laughter]. The only thing that would happen is you would have to go into a trance, which is the pitfall of the hinayana people, that they get into a trance because once they get there there's nobody to talk to, so they must evolve this kind of discipline which what is called a jñana state, jñana states where they contemplate infinite space, etcetera, etcetera, because there's nobody to talk to. Now, the buddhas in their infinite compassion are very delightful to talk to, even though they don't necessarily have to use words. But if you try to just do it yourself you're silly. That's why in Mr. Milani's talk he said it's necessary to have a spiritual friend. Not necessarily because you are so stupid and so ugly and all the rest of it, but because once you get to the sukhavati where the Buddha lives, or the akanishta realm, where the buddhas live, they would like to talk to you. But if you're so deaf and dumb that you have nothing to say because you have made your meditation practice into just simply trance state, what fun will you have? What goodness will you provide? And if you can't talk to the Buddha's well, then you're missing a good conversation.

On the other hand, they have taught that there is a way to enter that particular realm and that is to give up all personal concern and expand your mind in all directions. Now that can be done in your meditation practice by simply not concerning yourself with attainment, give up the attainment. Let the attainment fall like a rock down the side of a hill. Then generate the thought of enlightenment in terms of benefitting sentient beings. Think this way. Once you feel something solidly good, expand it so that anybody who is suffering can experience some of that. Then think, if I have any reserves, which you do, allow yourself to take the suffering of others and give back to them that which is good and wholesome. In that way, you will attain enlightenment in a very quick time.

Ah, right. So, that's basically what's called the bodhisattva vow. It's called the aspiration and the perseverance. The aspiration is to think that way. The perseverance is to not let anything disturb you from a personal point of view. That if someone doesn't want to give you the money that they owe you, don't sue them. If someone does not want to put in the hours of work, I'm sorry, if someone doesn't want to pay the proper attention to what's going on in the situation, don't defile them. If someone doesn't want to put in the hours of work that you think is necessary to accomplish what's good for everybody, don't deride them. If someone, where am I, one, two, three, four, what's the fourth one?

STUDENT: [inaudible]

VR: No, no, is that the fourth? Then I must have missed one. Oh, I missed the third one! I'm sorry. If someone doesn't want to agree with you, don't defile them, that's the third one. And if someone doesn't want to put in the hours of work that you think are necessary, don't cast them out. And if someone seems sloppy and not sharp enough, don't pick on them. And if someone seems stupid, make friends with them. So those are the six paramitas according to my instant interpretation [laughter]. Listen to the tape [laughter]. That's how to practice the dharma, and that's directly from my own experience and from what was taught to me.

So, aspiration is to think of the welfare of others. Perseverance is to be generous, to be disciplined, to be patient, to exert oneself, to have a one-pointed mind, and to recognize reality as it is. Which brings me to the last topic, which I'm sure you're glad about that [laughter]. To free all sentient beings you must have compassion and you must understand that compassion has no origin. Compassion itself is not doing good. Compassion is recognizing the very reality as it is. And reality as it is has no origin. Neither does the mind and neither does the mind's projections. Compassion itself never thinks of itself and it never has any memory. So if you've ever done anything good in your life and if you ever will, let it be part of the general benefit of all sentient beings. Let it be part of that ocean of kindness of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the past and don't think, ah, I did something good therefore I will get benefit.

The bodhisattvas of the past have worked tirelessly for our benefit and actually they incarnate again and again for our benefit and they have never had one thought of a vacation. The point is that compassion is empty of any concept and that in reality compassion is the reality just like the sun shining brightly in all directions the radiant wisdom of the Buddha's mind shines in all directions. That means that ultimate reality has no thought of itself and that is called in Buddhist terminology the experience of shunyata. Shunya means emptiness, ata means that. The emptiness of that. The emptiness of that which you do, think, speak, walk, feel, hear, taste, touch, the emptiness of that, experiencing that is pure compassion. When it radiates outward it is the manifestation of your own buddha nature.

So the bodhichitta is feeling sorry for yourself and others. And the culmination of that is attaining the wisdom, the radiant wisdom of compassion, realizing there is no self and no other, therefore there is just pure brilliance and manifesting that has no particular origin, it just manifests. As you are is as you are and as it manifests benefits others as long as you don't have the second thought of I did it. That's why you take the bodhisattva vow, those of you who have, and those of you who haven't, those of you who will, should always remember that the buddhas of the three times have never thought of themselves. That's why they're buddhas. And therefore they radiate such a friendly smile. They are so happy to see you.

So forgive me for this rambling talk. This is a general view of the mahayana vision. It is not meant to be a comprehensive one since we don't have a lot of time. But there are three points that you should remember: that personal liberation should be dissolved into space and space should be allowed to be itself and therefore when the thought of enlightenment occurs you should cease it and grasp it with a clear mind and clear vision that to become completely enlightened means to dedicate one's body speech and mind to all beings. And if you're wondering how long that takes, you should understand that sentient beings are endless. Therefore the activity of a bodhisattva has no end. And if you're wondering when that end will come, you should realize that this very moment is unencumbered by discursiveness. Therefore, whatever occurs after this is purely for the benefit of others. So, this is a general talk on the mahayana, and I apologize for the fact that I don't have enough time to go into it further. But if you catch my meaning, then probably we will meet each other again and again and probably we will do benefit for the others. So if you have any questions please feel free to ask them.

QUESTION: The question came up in a discussion group and it's come back to mind again. I have difficulty understanding where does action or intention come from? How does one motivate to do anything?

VAJRA REGENT: Pain.

Q: Other's pain.

VR: Well, if you practice shamatha you begin to realize that pain is not just one's pain or other's pain, it's sort of simultaneous. You can't really tell whether it's your pain or somebody else's pain, but you begin to realize the first noble truth, that the basic condition of this existence is suffering. And that motivation sort of, it breaks your heart.

Q: Where does any particular, you know, you decide then to do such and such?

VR: Well, that's what we're talking about now. You don't really decide how to do such and such. That's why you should meet a spiritual friend, because they can help you how to do, to teach you how to do that. Which you might get a little bit weird, going off into a compassionate trip. There's once you feel the suffering of sentient beings you can't help but try and do something, especially if you feel any goodness in yourself or any sense of feeling that you've accomplished some kind of relief.

Q: I guess I have trouble with the notion of, you know, long term planned activity that somehow you do, you know, you want, you know you can't just reach out a hand and expect to be useful to someone but you want to, you know, gather medicine or do whatever, which requires, you know, long term planning of some kind.

VR: Long term planning is not even close to it, my friend. It is said that the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara went to the Buddha Amitabha, I'm sure you've heard this, those of you who have I'm gonna say it again. He made a vow to Buddha Amitabha, I'm going to save all sentient beings. And so the Buddha Amitabha said to him, go ahead, save all sentient beings. And the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara went out to save all sentient beings. And feeling that he had done so came back to the Buddha Amitabha and said, I have saved all sentient beings. But he also said before he left, if I don't, may my head break into a hundred pieces. So having saved all sentient beings as he thought he went to the Buddha Amitabha and he said, I have saved all sentient beings. Buddha Amitabha said, turn around. He turned his head and he saw oceans of sentient beings. At this point his head busted into hundreds. So when you see pictures of Avalokiteshvara that's the story. Which is to point out that sentient beings are numberless and that if you think that at some point your action is going to end and then you will achieve release from suffering yourself you have misunderstood the nature of enlightenment.

Q: Well, I guess what I'm asking is, you know, one wants to do something.

VR: Do what you can. You know you take the bodhisattva vow, people here have taken the bodhisattva vow, and you say from this day onward I will dedicate everything I do to attain enlightenment for the benefit of others. But you also have to understand that at this, from this day onward you are just scratching at the surface. So we don't have to be silly about it, we just do what we can. But keep your mind in that frame - see what I mean? If you keep your mind in that frame that for the benefit of others I will always think that way. I mean, let me ask you a question, all of you, do you think that way? And you think, I want my eggs, basically, you know. The heat doesn't go on. I want my

heat. Think, you know, for the benefit of others. Dedicate the merit. If you get the heat that comes on you didn't expect it you think, oh great guru Karmapa thank you. And let me dedicate this heat because I am warm now and somebody else isn't. Think that way. I'm serious. Think that way. In post-meditation experience it helps tremendously.

When we talk about practicing generosity and patience and all the rest of the paramitas, what do you think you're going to do? How do you think you're going to do that? You have to catch the moment on the spot when you are missing something and you get it then you give it away. Am I making sense? We go the idea? It's very simple things, you know, like simple things like when you, you're going to the store where you want the strawberries and they are there and you think to yourself, ah. You bring the strawberries back. On the way back as you're going back catch yourself and think, for all sentient beings. Now just for my pleasure, same thing with your meditation practice, when you achieve a certain sense of tranquility in your meditation practice then allow your mind to expand and dedicate it to the others. Those who have never had the opportunity to hear the dharma and maybe never will, but in future lifetimes, extend your mind to them.

Q: Thank you very much.

VR: You're welcome. Harry my boy. Here comes Harry I'm taking a chance here [laughter].

QUESTION: Expanding your mind is that like giving your awareness direction?

VR: It's feeling tender. You know the tenderness of your own experience? You know when you're practicing meditation you will feel after you've conquered the discursive thoughts, at least on the first level, when you've conquered the discursive thoughts you feel somewhat self-satisfied, right? After you feel self-satisfied you begin to lose your tension. Once you feel you can do it then you don't feel there's any reason to do it. In other words it's not that you don't, it comes on you, the here I am, I feel, ok, here's a space, here's the mind, here am I, right? And you have to allow your ego to become like salt in water. Disperse your mind into the environment, let it go.

Q: As you said when that happens it becomes fuzzy and the clarity-

VR: -yeah, like salt in water it's not as clear as it was before, yeah.

Q: So I have the experience if I kind of go out with my sense perceptions suddenly the clarity comes back so to me developing precision is learning to focus without narrowing down but just-

VR: -that's right, that's right, you got it.

Q: So what happens when-

VR: -something else? [laughter]

Q: It was just introduction.

VR: That was a good one though! What did you just say?

Q: Well, how to-

VR: -when your sense perception...repeat what you just said.

Q: Well I think the point is to-

VR: -can't do it, can you.

Q: Not the same words.

VR: That's the point. We've got the idea. Something else?

Q: Yes.

VR: Ok. Courageous man, Harry [laughter]. Hope you got the last one.

Q: When pain is covered up-

VR: -oh, we're going to do it again?

Q: -with that kind of awareness-

VR: -yeah. Pain is covered with that kind of awareness?

Q: Yeah, from all the angles.

VR: Right.

Q: Does it dissolve?

VR: Pain?

Q: Yeah.

VR: It becomes solid like a rock.

Q: And then?

VR: Empty like space.

Q: Um hum. So it dissolves.

VR: No.

Q: Well, physical pain seems to -

VR: -oh my goodness, are you going to play a violin story for me now? Physical pain is the pain of the body, you should take it that way. If you have a body you will experience birth, sickness, old age and death and you shouldn't take it personally. [laughter]

Q: No, that's not what I meant. The usual way I relate to physical pain is I try to avoid it but if I can-

VR: -I'm not interested in psychological interpretations of things Harry. Do you have a question? I'm just playing with you, don't worry about it. Yes, ok, the way you relate to physical pain, you try to avoid it, do you really?

Q: Well that's the-

VR: -where can we go?

Q: That's the habitual pattern.

VR: Where can you go, to heaven?

Q: Well that's the painful part [laughter].

VR: Well that's what the Buddha taught! The reality of conditioned existence is what it is. How else do you think compassion happens unless you relate to the pain. You can never think of others, you can never attain enlightenment. Do you understand, ladies and gentlemen, what I'm talking about attaining enlightenment, that you cannot do it without relating to the conditioned existence that you have and therefore if you have any sense of conquering, if you can conquer your own attachment to your pain then it is possible to relate to others. Therefore if you relate to others the world becomes much bigger. Your mind begins to go out and expand and the boundaries between existence and non-existence dissolve. Are you sure you understand what I'm talking about?

Q: Yeah.

VR: I don't want to just say things for my own benefit, I don't, you know, I've heard myself talk a long time, you know.

Q: The reason why I started with the physical pain is I think that's an easy way to see it.

VR: No, no, no, no.

Q: The way I relate to it-

VR: -go the other way around. Start with the mental pain. Start with the mental pain. You see because mind precedes the body. First of all it, I would say it's much better to have physical pain than mental pain. Physical pain is just what it is because this particular formation of elements will go as it goes and decay as it decays. So that kind of pain is better. But in terms of your meditation practice it's good to relate to your mental pain so you know how to overcome your fixation on attachment to this. Therefore you can relate to other people. And relating to other people is good because it's a further extension of losing fixation to this. Have you got the idea? Yeah.

Q: Thank you.

VR: We'll see you again Harry [laughter]. You understand, ladies and gentlemen, that compassion has no reward.

QUESTION: I'm not sure if this is picking up on the last point but when we come in touch with the pain of attachment to conditional existence and the somewhat overwhelming nature of that and decide to loosen and let go of our grip there seems to be we're presented with the possibility that we could actually communicate with our

world in a genuine way, and with that there seems to be for me a difficulty in terms of proceeding...

VR: How to proceed. How to proceed.

Q: -without necessa...initially with our familiar world it seems as though we could create more pain with, in terms of the people we're relating to.

VR: Only way we create more pain is taking the credit for whatever we do that's good. Now, basically mind is empty and existence has no root. What we call ourselves is a purely temporary phenomenon and I don't want to scare anybody but, frankly speaking, all of us as we call ourselves right here that's a temporary phenomenon of the mind, and we will not be here after this and somebody else will. And that will also be a temporary phenomenon of the mind. So the Buddha taught, and so this cuts through any kind of clinging to egotism or any kind of clinging to false notions about how the mind itself manifests. We should be very clear about that. We're just here right now doing this thing and you know, when you die there's nobody going to be there to say hooray. You're dead.

The basic teaching of the mahayana which was taught by the buddhas, did you say it? The mantra? Om Ye Dharma Hetu Prabhava Hetun Teschan Tathagata Heyvadat Teshan Ca Yo Nirodha Evam Vadi Maha Shramanah Svaha. That all dharmas have a cause and the tathagata, the Buddha, taught that that cause has no origin. You catch that in your meditation practice and you free yourself from suffering, therefore you benefit other beings. That which you call yourself, what's your name? What's your name? Your refuge name.

Q: Totally left me.

VR: Totally left me.

Q: [Rangjun?] Tsultrum.

VR: [Ranjun?] Tsultrum. Yeah. That name is empty in itself. So you catch that mind, that's the Buddha's mind. Therefore that when this particular situation of our mind recreates itself, although our particular situation will not be the same it will be beneficial. Understand?

Q: Yes.

VR: Ah.

QUESTION: You, clarify the difference please between freeing yourself from suffering and avoiding it.

VR: First you should avoid it, then you should free yourself from it. In avoiding it, don't associate yourself with people who talk evil things and do evil things. Don't associate yourself with the things that will destroy your body. Don't read books and stuff like that associate with your mind, which will destroy your mind. Get rid of that one first. Then the next one is associate yourself with the people that will bring you close to the dharma. Read things that will help your dharma practice. Expand and finally practice the meditation, which will bring you to liberation. Does that sound technical to you?

Q: Sounds very practical.

VR: That's what I thought [laughter]. That's what I thought a long time ago actually. You see the bodhisattva's path is like Donald talked about the other night. What are the analogies, a ferryman, what?

STUDENT [DON?]: Guide.

VR: Guide. Ferryman. Someone who brings you to the other shore. You have to have that kind of mind. You have to let go of your own personal trip. You'd be surprised where your personal trip is, it's like in the toaster when you put the toaster down and you say, this [terrible?] thing. [laughter] This damn thing, this...toast goes up, ping, uh, it's not toasted enough [grunts] [laughter]. That's kind of bodhisattva humor, you see. But you know, not toasted enough, back you go. And the same thing with your own mind. When you work with it, don't be so silly for heaven's sake. Alright you practice meditation I appreciate it.

But let me tell you there is a vast world of bodhisattvas and buddhas that have worked for our benefit so that we could have this particular moment. That we could say not for ourselves. Not for ourselves but for all sentient beings we will attain the essence of enlightenment so that now and forever more whatever is required we will do it. That kind of mind, you know, is very special. This is what they do. And I myself have had the good fortune of meeting some of them and I'm just transmitting that to you. So when you're rowing up stream with your neurosis, take a little thought and take a little thought which is the thought of enlightenment, the bodhichitta, a little, a kind of flame that burns in your heart to be like the buddha and expand it further and further. Not love and lightly because you still have to row. You have to practice all those things that they said. But it's good to have the thought there, you see. It's good to actually connect with the fact that it's not just this but it's big, vast universe and your particular existence is meaningful in that it dissolves itself into the others. And other than that, as I said, the next seminar we do on where, on whatever planet we do it, and whichever way we look, it's not important to me. You understand?

So now we have a big space, huh? So when you do your meditation practice tomorrow, don't rest on anything, don't cling to anything, don't stray from anything and don't forget anything. And when you are finished practicing in your post-meditation experience, when you meet your, each other, dedicate the merit to the others, not to yourself. So if you have a good experience of meditation, had a good meditation, not a bad meditation, whatever is good dedicate to the others, whatever is bad keep to yourself. I'm...wanna say something? But you have to have a microphone my dear.

QUESTION: Well, for example, what, dedicating the merit going back to your example of the strawberries, you actually, if you actually are going to keep them to yourselves and not cut them up in a zillion little pieces and give them to sentient beings I don't quite get the point of dedicating the merit, what that really means.

VR: What? [laughter]

Q: Since we got-

VR: -strawberries. Strawberries, right right-

Q: -dedicating the merit you gave the example of strawberries-

VR: -you offer them, you offer them as you have them. You like them, right? You got them and you desire them. Like enlightenment you would desire to be free, right? You want to be free, right? Just like you want the good strawberries. It's the same thing, you understand? You go to the store and you see them there are the straw...there, I got them! You bring them, you're walking back to the car with the strawberries, I got them, think, just think at that point [snaps fingers] for all sentient beings.

Q: So even though you're not going to-

VR: -I take these strawberries-

Q: -actually give them to sentient beings, it's the-

VR: -you think of them!

Q: -it's a reminder to you to think in a more expansive way...

VR: Nah, there's more than that. When you eat them [laughter]. When you eat them you can't let your mind wander. Eat them, you can't say I dedicate these all to sentient beings. Then you get home and say hrrmmm! [laughter] You have to have continuous awareness that whatever is given to you, whatever happens in your life is purely blessing. And especially yourselves who have been introduced to the dharma. You're not like ordinary people, you understand. People don't, have never had this opportunity in their life to hear this teaching. They have never had this opportunity.

So, just think of it, you have a cracker. In your kitchen you go and you say I don't feel, I feel a little hungry, go to take a cracker. It's just a cracker out of a box with crackers in it. How did that cracker get there? How did that box get there? Somebody did it. Somebody made it. It didn't appear magically for your benefit suddenly for you benefit because you were the god of gods who deserved crackers [laughter]. Did you ever think of that? My dear friends did you ever think of that? Did you wear shoes and socks and everything and hair and...every...somebody did something there? How could you not dedicate it? Somebody did it. So think, all the time, see what I'm basically saying is that your mindfulness and awareness practice is expanded to think about all the others who did those things that you survive right now. The sweater you're wearing was made by somebody. No? And they worked on it. And you bought it in, maybe they got some benefit from you buying it. You know? And the shampoo that you used this morning was made by somebody and you used it on your hair and well [inaudible portion] [laughter]. Wasn't a particular thing about you. But [laughter] we don't usually think that way, you know, we don't think that way. Just, all right, here we go, a glass of sake.

And this is not thing about mother nature particularly, I'm not talking about [sighs] mother nature, you know, made these things. You know, I'm talking about that sentient beings, people who have a nervous system that's called sentient beings, they did that for you. Not for you specifically but they did it. So you have to keep that in mind. After you get the strawberries you're going to eat them. So you should eat them properly. When you eat them you should dedicate the merit of eating all food, wearing the clothes and whatever it is that comes into your sphere of consciousness. That's what's called developing an enlightened attitude or engendering the bodhichitta. The heart for dharma. Heart of enlightenment. When you begin to think it's not just my trip, there's something else. And hopefully you won't get too high on this because if you do tomorrow I'm going to punch you out [laughter].

[We do?] shamatha, vipashyana. Shamatha is to keep your mind steady. Vipashyana is to let your mind dissolve. Keep your mind steady, let your mind

dissolve. When your mind dissolves keep your mind steady. Let your mind dissolve. That's basic practice. Then after that, think about other people in everything that you do. You know, I don't, I'm not asking you to be completely paranoid but I'm asking you to be subtly paranoid that other people have done this for you. That's why I said all sentient beings have been your mother. That's what they said. Should be somewhat understanding that everything that you have and everything that's been given to you has been done by somebody else. So therefore you should have compassion and do not think negative thoughts about other people. And don't think [laughter] and don't think negative thoughts about yourself as well.

Well, I enjoyed very much talking to you. [inaudible portion] Please, those of you who have connection with the past lineage of teachers and those of you who have seen the Karmapa and Trungpa, Rinpoche and the gurus of the lineage, keep them in your mind. But basically make sure you understand that they understand that the mind itself never existed. So, I'm going to go outside [laughter] and go home to the recent home. Very good, very good, very good. So, it's not a matter of producing anything it's just simply what is. And in terms of compassion, compassion has no thought of who did it. And now, from the point of who did it and ran I will say to you goodnight and please keep your mind unencumbered. If you have thoughts, dedicate your thoughts to others and especially if they're good ones. If they're not good ones, in the same way dedicate them to others and alternately [recording cuts out] being hurt, being, having pain. But the Buddha taught that the pain is the nature of this particular existence therefore to feel that and to understand that then you will have more feeling for others and you will not be so critical when other people don't feel as bad as you do. Well you have the time, you have the time and you have the practice. Good for you, we appreciate it.