

Connecting with the Teacher

GOOD EVENING, ladies and gentlemen. It is indeed a delight to be here at this first Vajradhatu seminary to be held at Rocky Mountain Dharma Center. Tonight I would like to talk the relationship between the student and the teacher, especially in light of the fact tomorrow there will be refuge vows, which mark the entrance into the path of bodhi and also mark one's connection with the teacher.

In the Kagyü lineage, the relationship between the teacher and the student is primary; In fact, without such a relationship, any true understanding of the dharma would not be possible. As you have already learned, the relationship between the student and the teacher has various levels, which we talk about in terms of the three-yana principle.

In the hinayana stage, one's relationship with the teacher has a lot to do with one's appreciation of the teachings. When we first hear and appreciate the dharma, we are like a person getting the proper medicine, and the person who presents the dharma to us, is like a physician. In some ways you could say that our appreciation of the dharma to an emergency situation: our life, our relationships, and our understanding of our situation have become so clogged up and congested that we have to see a good doctor. If we don't see a good doctor, we don't know what we'll do.

By coincidence, which is auspicious, and because of our desire to rid ourselves of we come into contact with an authentic teacher who presents the authentic dharma, and when we hear the dharma, there is an immediate sense of relief. It's like taking when you have an infection. The doctor says, "Well, take these, and within twenty-four hours you should feel better." It's something like that. When we hear the dharma, and begin to practice the dharma, within a short time we begin to feel better. However, at this stage of practice the teacher is not all that important, in a sense, because still fixated on our own disease; we are still involved with self-concern, so the Medicine itself is most important to us. We look on the teacher as a good person, a wise physician, someone who can dispense the proper medicine to us at the proper time, As we begin to feel better about ourselves, as we begin to practice meditation and the Four Noble Truths, we begin to relax, and a healthier situation evolves. At that point we look at the teacher differently. There is a certain degree of awe that such a thing happen at all, that people like ourselves who feel so sick could actually be helped: (P20)so we begin to feel appreciation for the teacher in a different way. The quality of awe is appreciating that a person, a human being like ourselves, could be so genuinely kind and genuinely concerned about us that he or she would be thoughtful enough to prescribe that good medicine. That experience makes us feel close to the teacher in a personal way, on an eye-to-eye level.

We begin to see the teacher as someone who has accomplished a great deal and, at the same time, as someone who has actually seen our embarrassment. And so we begin to develop ambivalent feelings, We are in awe of the teacher; at the same time we are embarrassed. When you're really sick, it doesn't matter what the doctor sees. When you feel better, it matters a little bit. [Laughter.] You begin to think, "Well, I don't think I really have to go back. I feel better now. it's okay. I don't have to see the doctor again," but there's some other thing happening: we still rely upon our own self-consciousness as a means of feeling healthy.

So further along in our journey we relate to the teacher in a very personal way, and at a certain point we have no choice but actually to meet the teacher face-to-face, eye to eye. That comes along after we have practiced a good deal and feel somewhat secure in our practice. The crack in the ice, so to speak, is that we still might have a relapse, and it may be necessary to see the doctor again. That embarrassment is actually the power of the relationship between student and teacher, because once you understand that the teacher has seen you in a naked state, has seen your neurosis and your sanity, then you have no choice but to trust that person. At the same time it's very difficult to be open and to feel at ease with your teacher. There is some sort of feeling that you might slip back into some neurotic state, and you don't want to be embarrassed again. You don't want the teacher to see you looking foolish.

At that point it is necessary actually to step forward, so to speak, which might be the beginning of the birth of bodhicitta or compassion in your nature. Having a friend, having someone you can speak to, someone you can talk to eye to eye, is completely uplifting. When you become less afraid of the nakedness of your own

mind and your own state of being, then the teacher truly becomes a friend. You realize that any holding back, any attempt to create a facade of sanity, actually goes against the grain. The path will not progress unless you can actually be honest and straightforward.

That kind of relationship is fundamental and ongoing. However, at a certain stage you begin to realize that being buddy-buddy with the teacher is not the point. The point is that the teacher actually is the key to unlocking the treasury of the dharma, which is the treasure of enlightened mind. At that point it is necessary to surrender your ego entirely, to give up any sense of holding something back for yourself. Therefore, following the instructions of the guru is the primary practice. In terms of our experience here, so far you have been doing the good shamatha practice, I take it. And seeing the teacher involves all those attitudes at the same time.

If I might backtrack a little bit, the Kagyü lineage is called the succession lineage, which means that the entire lineage is based on the relationship between the teacher and the student from generation to generation. That relationship has to do primarily with the student recognizing that it is necessary to surrender body, speech, and mind to the teacher in order to receive the teachings, because surrendering body, speech, and mind is actually an (P21)expression of egolessness. It is not an expression of stupidity or cowardice, but rather an expression of egolessness. To surrender one's body, speech, and mind to the teacher means that one is able to open one's mind to the guru's mind, the teacher's mind; open one's speech in terms of eye-level communication with the guru; and open one's body, in the case of receiving the instructions in how to practice meditation. In the Kagyü lineage, opening in that way is based on devotion. But I think that the relationship with the teacher is based primarily on nonconceptual flash. Even if you've read books and heard stories and whatnot, when you actually see the teacher for the first time there is a moment of mind without preconceptions, and that in itself is the continuity of your practice from the beginning to the result.

However, it is necessary to understand the practical aspect of working with the teacher in terms of surrendering preconceptions. Even if you have a flash of enlightened mind when you see your teacher, your previous karma will still play itself out, so therefore it is necessary to follow the instructions and practice the dharma. Very central to that is recognizing that when you are in a situation like this, it is obviously a training situation. But you have to become very steady, in the sense that your appreciation of the environment is such that you recognize that this situation is sacred. When you come into this shrine tent, or you walk on this land, or you go to the dining tent, or to your class, you are involving yourself in what we might call the sacred world. Sacred in this case means that because of the practice of mindfulness, you begin to see precisely that all the elements of your world - this world - are without ego. So there is an expansive attitude and at the same time, a disciplined attitude, because sacredness has to do with discipline. You don't have to cook up that attitude of sacredness and say, "Well everything is sacred, these brocades and satins and whatnot, and the trees and the rain and the mud and . . ." You don't have to say that to yourself. Sacredness means appreciating that, especially in this situation at seminary, you are in a total environment which was actually instigated by your connection with the teacher. Therefore there is a sacred bond with yourself and your world, and the very fact that you are fortunate enough to hear the teachings in this environment is also sacred world. So that's taking a certain kind of attitude.

Once you have taken that attitude, the notion of surrender is to open your ears and eyes and tongue and heart and allow the dharma to enter into your system. There's no reason at this point for you to resist what's actually taking place. Surrendering is letting go of your preconceptions about what should or shouldn't happen, what you should get out of this and what you shouldn't, and opening to the situation and letting go, surrendering your personal idea, which brings along with it the experience of expectation and disappointment.

There is no doubt that we all enter this particular path with certain expectations. We want to become a Buddha, an enlightened being, as a sort of general expectation. In the case of Milarepa, for example, it was much more specific, but for most of us there is that general expectation. Then along the way we have expectations about what we should be feeling and experiencing, what we know and don't know, how we compare to the other students or how we don't. There is a lot of expectation and also a lot of disappointment, because when we have such expectations, occasionally, I might say, they are not fulfilled. [Pause.] That was a joke, folks. [Laughter.] Only occasionally. The main point here is that expectation and disappointment should not be rejected as something evil, or as signs of an unenlightened state of mind. Expectation comes along with the desire to free oneself from confusion, and disappointment comes along with the fact that it hasn't happened yet.

(P22)If you try to conceptualize your emotions or thoughts or feelings or bodily sensations, if you try to encapsulate and concretize them, they will cause you more difficulty. On the other hand, if you can experience those expectations and disappointments very directly, then you'll see that our lives are very raw and . . . natural? Yes. Very raw, like Rocky Mountain Dharma Center. Sometimes it's very painful to look at that; you see that it's not as smooth as you would like it to be or as you had hoped it might be. On the other hand, it is very illuminating.

if you can actually relax, step back a little, and take a look at your emotional world. your physical world and your spiritual, psychological world, without bias and without attaching an ego to the expectation and the disappointment, then you can actually feel that world. When you feel it, then you make a connection with the guru, the teacher. the obvious mind of the moment.

All in all, for people like ourselves it is best to practice meditation. [Laughter.] When we look at ourselves, we glimpse the awakened state of mind. That glimpse should become continuous, so that what you see and what you experience, the inside and the outside. are of one nature. A long time ago, it seems like a long time ago, or maybe not that long ago, the Vidyadhara said that whenever you find resentment, you will find absence of practice. He also said to us a long time ago, "If you want to tune in to my mind, just practice meditation, and then I can say what I really want to say to you."

So all in all, I could sum up these particular thoughts by saying that if you really want to connect to the mind of the teacher, then you should practice meditation the way he has taught it. In that way, your mind connects to his and you begin to see the continuity and the totality of awakening. It's very simple and straightforward, and yet, like most simple, and straightforward things, it is hard to realize.

Those of you who are taking refuge should understand this particularly. Those of you who have already taken refuge should remember that the practice is the mind of the Buddha, the dharma is the speech of the Buddha, and the environment is the body of the Buddha. The same with the teacher; since the teacher is the Buddha, it is the same. So practice diligently, and doubt will disappear like this rain. [Laughter. Rain, which was pouring down the beginning of the talk, has stopped unnoticed until now.] So if you have any questions, please feel free to ask them.

QUESTION: Sir, you said that the desire to become a buddha was our general aspiration, and in the case of Milarepa it was much more specific. Could you elaborate on that particular point?

VAJRA REGENT: Well, I think the specific quality of Milarepa's aspiration was that he experienced suffering, or the First Noble Truth, to such an intense degree that it flipped his mind, and he could see that there was no other path but to attain enlightenment, so he shed all other desires. It's not really different for any of us. I mean, you know, you wake up in the middle of the night and you say, "I'm going to die," or something like that, and then you go back to sleep. [Laughter.] When he thought that, Milarepa got up and practiced. He'd think, "The time is short, and we don't know when we're going to die, so better practice now." It's just a matter of intensity.

(P23)Our lineage is full of stories, like those in *The Rain of Wisdom*, of great practitioners who have done such things. When you meet your teacher you realize that he has done such things. It's very inspiring. I think the difference is simply in the discipline. The intention is the same in all sentient beings, and that is to want to hear the dharma; to accomplish what is beneficial; to attain enlightenment for oneself for the benefit of others. But the karmic propensities of their activity may be such that people can't get to the cushion. on the other hand, the karmic propensities of Milarepa's activity were such that he had no choice. See what I mean? You know the story.

Q: A little bit, sir. With this study period we only have perhaps an hour a day to practice, if that, and it seems very difficult to get up in the middle of the night and practice. [Laughter.]

VR: Well, I think the main point, as I said earlier, is to take part in the sacred environment of this particular situation. When it's time to study, study; when it's time to practice, practice. if it happens that you wake up in the middle of the night and you are so inclined, don't be shy. [Laughter.]

Q: Thank you, sir.

Q: Sir, feeling that longing and also, sort of, shyness and embarrassment about contacting the teacher directly, and also being somewhat remote from the teacher most of the time, can contacting the teacher's world as his mind be considered contacting the teacher directly?

VR: Yes; that's the whole point of what I was saying. And especially through the practice of meditation. That's the main way. There is the sky, and then there are clouds, then there are the mountains, then there are trees and rocks and whatnot, and then there's this tent, and then there's this cushion and then there's you sitting on it.

Q: Thank you, sir.

Q: Sir, you said whenever you find resentment, you find absence of practice.

VR: I didn't say that. Rinpoche said that to me. [Laughter.]

Q: oh, I see. Well ...

VR: I found that it was true, but ... [Laughter.]

Q: Yeah, it takes . . . I don't know, it seems at first when you start sitting you don't find much resentment, or there's sort of a honeymoon. But then, I've been practicing eight years, and resentment never goes away, so ... [Laughter.]

Q: Then you see through it faster?

VR: Well, it's not that it's supposed to go away particularly.

VR: No, it's just a matter of seeing it when it happens, having some sort of clear vision. When you begin to develop resentment, there's negativity all around, and you begin to blame everything outside, whether it's the person who's sitting next to you or the person who isn't, or the guy driving the bus, or whatever. As a practitioner, you will notice that you are not practicing, and when that becomes ...

(P24)Q: So when resentments come up you see them and you don't act them out, you don't express them. You just let them go their ...

VR: Well, I don't know if whether or not to act them out is the main point. The main point is to see clearly that the cause of the resentment is one's lack of practice. And lack of practice makes one feel guilty.

Q: Yeah, it does.

VR: It's a neurotic thing, you see. It's a neurotic thing. When you don't practice and you start to feel antagonistic toward the world and people around you, you start to feel guilty, but you feel more guilty because you're not practicing. But then when you don't practice for a long time you feel guiltier still, and you don't think you can practice because it's been so long that you feel removed from it.

Q: So the whole damned thing's hopeless, almost, after a certain point.

VR: Well, that's true. [Laughter.] And then, that's when you should practice.

Q: Right.

VR: Because it's hopeless to continue that way.

Q: Right.

VR: Yeah.

Q: It's like beating your head against the wall.

VR: Well, it's the same thing we're talking about with Milarepa, you know. It is something like understanding that it's not embarrassing to practice when you don't feel good. In fact, Khyentse Rinpoche and, I think, most Buddhist teachers have said that to practice with obstacles is the best practice.

Q: I guess some of us have the best practice, then. [VROT laughs; laughter.] Thank you, sir.

VR: You're welcome. [Laughs; laughter.]

Q: Sir, what happens when sometimes in the middle of the whole practice environment, you start feeling the total ordinariness of the whole thing and wonder what you're doing in the first place?

VR: Well, the first thing you said I understand. The second thing is extraordinary. When you start feeling the ordinariness of the whole thing, I understand it. When you start to say, "I wonder what I'm doing?", that's not ordinary any more, that's extraordinary.

Q: Excuse me? [Laughter.]

VR: The ordinariness of the whole thing is simply what it is. Your comment about it is extraordinary. It's on top of the ordinary.

Q: Which means?

VR: Which means that one should label thoughts as thinking. [Laughter.]

(P25)Q: Well, I'm referring specifically to a kasung experience.

VR: I see. So you're not talking about meditation practice as such ...

Q: No.

VR: ... but postmeditation experience.

Q: Yeah.

VR: That's different. Okay. Well, it's not different from our experience. Yeah?

Q: I don't know, it's very hard to describe, but in the middle of this whole thing, it started to rain and I had to hold an umbrella over the Vidyadhara's head ...

VR: Mm-hmm.

Q: . . . and I got half wet. Being wet in itself was fine, but being that close to him I felt very close but I also felt so far away. [VROT laughs; laughter.] What's so funny?

Why is that funny?

VR: It sounds familiar; I don't know. [Laughter.] It sounds familiar.

Q: Anyway, I suppose resentment came in, but at the same time ...

VR: What do you mean? About being wet, or about not being close enough, or not ...

Q: Well, actually, both, because I was like five inches away from him.

VR: That close!

Q: Yeah.

VR: And you only got half wet? [Laughs; laughter. Applause.] Well, I think that I was talking about that earlier in terms of sacredness. The mind of sacredness or the feeling of sacredness is realizing that one's teacher is actually the Buddha in person, and that whatever way we relate to our teacher, whether it is as a kasung holding an umbrella, or just listening to a talk, or watching the car go by, or seeing his smile, or a gesture of some kind, that mental preconceptions stop. Then they start up again. So if you actually do your good shamatha practice properly, then you can discriminate between the feeling of separateness and the feeling of totality, or unity, or whatever. Basically, it's just labeling thoughts thinking. I think that's it.

Q: So even if you think that you've lost the sense of sacredness ...

VR: Yeah.

Q: ... it's not really true?

VR: It's not true. You can't lose it because there's no ego involved.

Q: Well, that's ...

VR: It's only the notion of ego that loses something. You know, what are you doing here, anyway? You know?

Q: I don't know [Laughter]

(P26)VR: I don't believe you. I don't believe you. You didn't just fall off a rock. [Laughter. Maybe in your mind you did. At a certain point, you may say, "What, what . . ." but there's a definite cause and effect quality to everything that happens here. And you know what you're doing here. It doesn't need second thoughts, basically. I guess that's the whole point. If you can practice the dharma and hear the teachings without obstruction, if conceptualization arises, if a discursive thought arises, if emotional tendencies arise, then one should not fixate on them particularly, but allow them to be just like the weather, just like the rain stopped.]

Q: Thank you.

VR: Gentleman with the blue sweater. [Laughter. Applause. Student actually is wearing a blue sweater.] With the red hair. [Laughter. Student's hair is black.]

Q: Sir, we're doing more than just practicing shamatha here, There's a lot of ritual and chanting and so on.

VR: Yes.

Q: I was wondering what our relationship to that is supposed to be.

VR: The same relationship you have to your shamatha practice. In terms of the intellect, you should know the components of the chants you are doing. In other words, if you're doing the Mahakala chant, or the Lineage chant, you should understand intellectually what is going on there. But feeling-wise, you should take the attitude of shamatha. Do it simply.

Q: I personally feel somewhat indifferent to the whole thing. It seems sort of empty. I was just wondering if there's a problem there.

VR: No, there's no problem there. [Laughter.]

Q: Okay, thank you, sir.

Q: Sir, you mentioned that when we relate to the teacher that we're afraid of the nakedness of our mind. Could you say something more about that?~ What does it mean?

VR: Well, it's like an echo. You see, when you have an experience of nakedness with your teacher, you are not holding onto any particular storyline about who you are. You just meet your teacher face to face; the feeling of nakedness is complete, full.

Q: Mm-hmm.

VR: Then later on there's a memory, so trying to go back again makes one slightly embarrassed. It's almost like Adam and Eve.

Q: Uh-huh. [VROT covers his groin and chest with his hands. Laughter.]

VR: However, because of the sanity of the nakedness, you can't help yourself. Are we talking about the same thing? You were getting at something else, I'm afraid.

Q: You said when we relate to the teacher, we are afraid of the nakedness.

VR: Right.

Q: So we are afraid of being embarrassed or being kind of exposed?

VR: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Q: That's what the ...

VR: Mm-hmm.

Q: Thank you.

VR: Again, you don't have to reject that kind of experience; you don't have to throw it out. In fact, the way to go forward is by working with what you have. It is the same with your meditation practice. You might find that your thoughts are too aggressive or too dull, or your body's in too much pain to continue, or the environment is too wet or too dry, or something like that. Use those very things to continue. That's the path. The path is what you have, not what you imagine.

Q: Sir, I've come up to take refuge, and met the Vidyadhara today, which made me very nervous. I think it's more than just actually having an encounter with the man himself. The whole dharma, and this taking refuge makes me very nervous [laughter], and this quality of underlying nervousness makes it hard to relate to the things that I have been doing; my work, my living situation, all of that.

(P27)VR:

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Q: It even seems to make it difficult for me to relate to the dharma, as if the dharma itself is becoming an obstruction.

VR: The dharma's like a sieve. It doesn't hold anything, so if you put your ego trip into it, it goes right through.

Q: I'm not sure I understand that.

VR: I'm not sure you're asking me a question.

Q: I guess I was hoping that you would be able to say something about that aspect of getting to a point with the dharma where there seems to be some blockage.

VR: That's what I'm saying. The dharma is like a sieve.

Q: okay.

VR: You see? Just practice and study that way. Nothing's held. It just goes through. When you try to latch onto the dharma as a concept, basically you're saying, "Well, the dharma seems to be that way." You can't say that about the dharma, because the dharma doesn't have any essence in terms of a body, in terms of what you call an existence as such. It's just going to go through. So when you're saying that the dharma seems that way, you should examine what you're saying, because the teachings that you study and the dharma that you practice will not accumulate any kind of tendency, any kind of conceptualization. It'll just go through.

Q: Thank you.

Q: Hello, sir.

VR: Hello. Nice to see you.

(p28)Q: Nice to see you. Would you say something about dreams that one has about the teacher? Are they a form of meeting the teacher, or are they more a form of preconception, expectation, or are they both? [Laughter.]

VR: Well, generally speaking, the Buddha said that dreams are illusion and one should not rely on dreams. I would take that as a basic. It is also taught that dreams that are not produced from ordinary thought patterns are dreams that one should recognize and pay attention to. It takes some degree of attainment in one's practice, that is to say, stillness of one's mind and body, in order to be able to discriminate whether or not dreams are produced by habitual patterns.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

Q: Sir, a question came up in our abhidharma class last night that I thought perhaps you could help us clarify. How does one perceive or experience the power of this land, the power of the lineage? How does that power come through to a person? It doesn't seem like it's through sight, or ...

VR: Are you talking in terms of abhidharma, how does one experience the accumulated spiritual power of this particular place? Is that what you're talking about?

Q: Yes, sir.

VR: Well, you have to do it. The way I experience it is through very simple, direct perception. And that simple, direct perception has to do with what is taught in the abhidharma: that the skandhas and dhatus, the ayatanas, that kind of actual pure perception of the formation of one's consciousness is the same as the way one opens to the larger vision of the spiritual power of a particular place. That's why we teach the fundamental practice of shamatha in order to connect the mind to its apparent formation, including the sense perceptions. If you don't appreciate the sense perceptions without ego, then there's no way to tune into the spiritual power of a place or situation like this.

Q: How is it actually entering? When I walk around this land, when I've been here for three weeks I feel it constantly. How is that actually coming into me? I can't see it, I can't smell ...

VR: Too bad. [Laughter.]

Q: But I feel it. It's like a presence.

VR: You do? Why are you asking me about it? [Laughs; laughter.] Well, we get into Erector sets here, and Lionel trains, and all that stuff. Are you trying to equate abhidharma teaching with how you feel the presence of this particular place?

Q: Uh-huh.

VR: In the same way. Form, feeling, perception, concept, consciousness, all those things. That's how you feel it. You don't feel it any other way. There's no other principle involved here. Otherwise we get into some kind of theistic notion of "How I feel it." There's no way that you feel it. It just happens that way. But it happens in a particular way that can be noted by the conscious mind.

(P29)Q: Thank you.

VR: Is that good enough for the abhidharmists? Probably not. [Laughter.]

Q: Sir, you talked earlier about the feeling of separateness when you were talking to this woman over here, and just labeling it. Is there a difference between the feeling of separateness ...

VR: Boy, that's a whole lot different from what she said. Anyway, go ahead.

Q: All Is the feeling of separateness the same as the feeling of yearning?

VR: Yes. And thoughts about that should be labeled thinking. [Laughter.]

Q: But it doesn't necessarily go away, you know. I mean, if you label ...

VR: I don't know.

Q: Okay. [Laughter.]

VR: Whether it goes away or not is not the point. You see, as I was saying earlier, in order to connect with the teacher's mind, one should practice the instructions. Or, in this case, the shamatha meditation. What is the shamatha meditation exactly? To allow the body, speech, and mind to be as they are. If thoughts arise, one should label them thinking. In terms of the body, one should realize that there is a sense of basic healthiness. In terms of thought, it's just like the breath going out and dissolving in space. So in that way you connect with your teacher's mind.

Q: Thank you, sir.

Q: Sir, we've been in the study period for two days now, and one of the things that keeps ... that's my feeling about it, too. [Laughs; laughter.]

VR: I had a feeling you had that feeling. [Laughter.] Yes.

Q: One of the things that ...

VR: Two days straight.

Q: Hmm?

VR: Two whole days. [Laughter.]

Q: One of the things that seems to happen a lot in the classes is that we logic things into the ground. My question is what's the balance between something becoming discursive thought ...

VR: Mm-hmm.

Q: ... and practicing and studying to the point where you're really doing that fully?

VR: Well, I think that in your discussion groups and your classes you should be free enough to let your mind roam and you should be disciplined enough to rein it in when it goes too far off course. Basically, stick to the subject that you're talking about, and it won't go that far. When you study, study. Study does not mean memorizing. In other words, (P30) when you study it's not so much that you have to remember everything that's said, or everything you ever read. Study means opening your intellect to the possibility of dialogue with the subject. In this case, whatever you're talking about, whether it's abhidharma, or prajnaparamita, or Shambhala culture, when you're in that environment, you should not be afraid to allow your mind to roam, so to speak. But it's always good not to leave a mess. This applies to the teachers as well, by the way, when you begin talking about any particular topic, don't be afraid to let things roam around the space, but make sure that, when you finish, you tie it up so it doesn't become messy at the end, and basically it's okay, you know. You don't have to put that much constraint on your inquisitiveness. At the same time, if you're way off, everybody's going to know it anyway, if you're sitting there in that group and you start to talk about things that have no relationship whatsoever to the topic.

Q: Thank you.

VR: Ladies and gentlemen, again it is a pleasure to be at the Vajradhatu Seminary. I am so glad that I am able to come and talk to you here and discuss these things with you. You have quite a ways to go. [Laughter.] Actually, this is not my usual slot. [Laughter.] See, I usually come in during the vajrayana section and the-

STUDENTS: Come back!

VR: Thank you, thank you. [Applause.] Well, I would very much like to do that, and if there is any possibility I will. But I would like to say one thing before we end this particular meeting. That is that the quality of practice, whether it's hinayana, Mahayana or vajrayana, or the intention and the tone and the texture of the practice should be the same. The intensity will differ. It will change a little bit because of your experience, not because of the basic teaching that you are receiving, because in our lineage and the way the Vidyadhara has taught, there is an indestructible unity between the hinayana, Mahayana and vajrayana teachings. In other words, you heard the main thing right at the beginning, and at the end, if you check it out, you'll hear the same thing again. [Laughter.] According to our experience, meaning my experience and yours, it will be different, because we are practitioners and we are actually partaking in this great feast of dharma and this great opportunity to be with a truly awakened person. So you should take advantage of it by practicing very diligently, and when you feel bad about yourself, don't be upset. And when you feel good about yourself, don't be too impressed. [Laughter.] In that way you can actually

do this seminary without it doing you. [Laughter.] On the other hand, if it does you, you shouldn't be upset about that either. [Laughter.]

So, I think buddhism goes beyond Catch-22. [Laughter.] There are more catches than we can remember, so therefore it's very simple. Practice with an ordinary and simple mind, and listen to the teacher and follow his instructions and nothing can go wrong. So I thank you for your patience and generosity and my best wishes for your good health and success on the path. Thank you.