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VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN

Intensive Training Seminar: "Patience: the Armor of Nonaggression"

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Talk One of Three

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VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN:

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to this Intensive Training Session. Our topic is patience. One of the major obstacles on the path to enlightenment is the strong emotion associated with aggression. And that emotion is called anger. We should understand from the very beginning—those of you who are new here, and those of you who have been here many times before, those of you who have practiced meditation, and those of you who have never practiced meditation—that anger destroys that which has been accumulated through practice. Anger creates mental distress and a loss of equanimity, not only in one's waking hours but also throughout one's life. Anger is the cause of disturbed mind, which affects the way one sleeps, eats, relates with friends, relatives, husbands, wives, whatever. It is said that there can be no peacefulness in one's being as long as there is anger. Anger arises and from it there is intent to harm. That intent to harm is associated with body, speech and mind. When we are angry we cause harm, not only through physical action, but by our thought process and by our words.

The intent to harm is associated with the lack of patience. When we as individuals have no patience, we are generally disliked by others. Even if we build up relationships over a long period of time, even though we try to be kind and generous, one burst of anger causes tremendous shock waves in our relationships. It creates a karmic windfall so to speak, which is not easily overcome. Even one moment of anger creates such a karmic stain, so to speak.

Furthermore, when we allow our minds to be open to this strong emotion of anger, we become subject to the attacks of the four maras. Having lost any sense of equanimity, we become subject to devaputramara, which is the sense of stupidity and complacency; we become subject to kleshamara, that is the devious web of all the neurotic emotions, such as jealousy, pride, hatred, whatnot, which create constant self deception; and furthermore, we become prey

to skandhamara, that is, we become habitually addicted to behaving in a degraded fashion, neurotic fashion. We become addicted to history, so to speak. And lastly, we become prey to the yamamara, the mara of death, that is, we become imprisoned by time and space and are subject to continuous rounds of rebirth. All of these consequences are due to the arising of anger.

However, by developing patience, we can actually cut the root of anger on the spot. It is further said that by developing patience on a relative level, we can attain whatever we wish in our lifetime, whatever is desirable. It is said in the text that a man, a woman, who has patience is known to be wealthy and beautiful and all the rest of it. That simply means that we attain our desires. And furthermore, we attain, we have the possibility of attaining the ultimate wish, and that is the attainment of complete enlightenment.

Patience as the armor of nonaggression is important, is an important phrase, because we must realize that the essence of the buddhadharma is nonaggression, and the essence of the awakened state of mind is nonaggression. So, therefore, anger is the opposite of buddhahood. Not only is nonaggression the manifestation of enlightenment, but nonaggression is also the path to enlightenment. And the essence of nonaggression is patience.

What is the essence of patience? Patience is being prepared for every moment that arises. Being prepared for whatever arises in one's life, in one's situation, means that we have patience in three aspects. One, we have patience with people that are seemingly harmful. Two, that we have patience to endure discomfort and misery. And third, we have the patience to investigate the nature of reality.

How this type of patience is applied in body, speech, and mind is first through the practice of shamatha meditation, mindfulness. Through the practice of mindfulness we begin to realize the egolessness of self. That is to say that the notion of self is without any substantial quality. There is no such thing as a permanently abiding self. When we realize that, we are prepared to work with people that are seemingly harmful, because we realize in ourselves that such ego tendency is without any substantial base. Secondly, we investigate the nature of misery itself and that is through the experience of vipashyana or insight. That is to say, we not only realize the egolessness of ourselves, but we realize the egolessness of others at the same time. And thirdly, investigating the nature of the whole of reality comes about through bodhisattva activity. Having realized the egolessness of oneself and others through dedicating oneself continuously to other's benefit, that is, those who have not realized such egolessness, we begin to fully realize the egolessness of all phenomena. In this way we apply patience in body, speech, and mind, and we cut the root of anger.

If you have any questions we could have a discussion.

QUESTION: Sir, how do we cause harm by our thought processes?

VAJRA REGENT: When thought of anger arises in one's mind it eventually leads to speech and bodily action.

Q: Does it cause any harm of its own nature?

VR: The thought itself? When one realizes egolessness of the thought process then it does not cause harm.

Q: Thank you.

VR: But on the other hand, if angry thoughts arise and we attach the notion of ourselves to those thoughts it definitely causes harm. Gentleman in the back. Could you please wait for the microphone?

QUESTION: Is there a distinction between wrathfulness and anger, and how does one know the difference? Is there a wise application to that?

VR: I think that if you are talking about wrathful in terms of a mahakala or those principles, the wrathfulness which cuts ego, there is a difference between that and anger. Yes. How does one know the difference? Well, certainly by the result.

Q: Thank you, Sir.

VR: As we said earlier, that anger disturbs whatever has been accumulated through practice. If you accumulate, according to the texts, you may have practiced for eons the tranquility of meditation but just the rising of anger can destroy all of that. It's actually said. And I suppose if you look at your own experience it is that way.

QUESTION: Sir, when anger does arise, then would the appropriate response be to use that as a reminder for the mindfulness?

VR: Well, we'll be discussing at length tomorrow the further application of when anger does arise and how we work with it. But we've already talked about the application in terms of threefold process, that is investigating the nature of causing harm or harmful person, that is to say, usually anger arises not because of some sort of abstract thought we have, it arises because something in the situation provokes us to be impatient, whether it's someone's words or their actions or something that you don't like, something smells bad perhaps, anything causes you to be impatient, you see, that's the first part of investigating the nature of what is harmful outside. And secondly, investigating the nature of how one feels discomfort about that, itself. And thirdly, investigating both combined, the whole environment. So, we have to think about that in terms of application. So, we'll talk about that tomorrow night—how those three points are applied in terms of oneself, others and phenomena. But the main point here is to understand quite thoroughly the ground that we are preparing together, because it directly affects your meditation practice.

Q: Thank you.

VR: But the point is to wake up, obviously. We all too often consider the arising of anger as simply something that we can abide with because we have done so for a very long time and it seems like a natural thing just to go along, we just go back to our meditation practice. But if we look at it very carefully, one strong moment of anger throws us off for a very long time. So we have to learn how to work with that. Gentleman in the back, all the way in the back.

QUESTION: Sir, you mentioned that we should try to begin to fully realize the egolessness of all phenomena. Could you clarify that a little bit or say a few more things about that?

VR: Yes, well the first of, the first phenomena is oneself. From the Buddhist point of view we call the appearance of a self, a phenomena. Phenomenon? What is it? Phenomena, yes. That is to say, that the appearance of self is a totally haphazard event that occurs without any particular reference; just arises, this notion of self. And it's usually based on some sense of shock. In this case, we're talking about the arising of a self based on anger. So that's the first phenomena we have to realize, that when anger arises that does not necessarily constitute a self. That's very important. You see we attach the notion of "I" to the arising of an emotion, such as anger, and then "I am angry," therefore you have to retaliate somehow, you have to do something about that. So that's the first phenomena. And to realize that takes the perfection of mindfulness. In other words, one has to be on the dot, one has to be precise to catch the arising of the emotion and let it be there. Let it be. Let it go. Let it go out into space, as we do with the shamatha practice. Have you practiced shamatha? Yeah, so you understand. When a thought arises, there is no sense of trying to seize it, capture it, hold onto it as my thought. So, letting go of that, one begins to see that whatever arises in that way does not constitute a self.

Secondly, whatever arises in relationship with others in the same way we look at that from the point of view of larger perspective, which is called vipashyana, insight. We begin to see that since this happens with such a person as myself, we begin to look around and say it happens with such people as everybody. Everybody has that same experience. We begin to have insight into the nature of confusion altogether, especially in terms of anger. Then, finally, we begin to see that not only beings do not have any permanent substance, but all of phenomena has no permanent substance—beings, myself, other, and all of phenomena, so we realize egolessness completely in that way. Usually, the last part, the third part of realizing the egolessness of phenomena, only comes when we tread on the mahayana path. But the first two very definitely can come through sitting practice.

Gentleman in the front here.

QUESTION: Sir, could you clarify the idea of body and how it relates to shamatha? Is it because the idea of self has a seeming sense of body, has a sense of substance to it?

VR: That's one aspect of substance. There are three aspects of substance that are attached to this notion of self. One is body. The other is speech. The other is mind.

Q: Speech is more an active relationship with others?

VR: That's right. And mind is the basis of the whole thing.

Q: Thank you.

VR: You're welcome.

Gentleman here.

QUESTION: Sir, I understood in having just taken a Jewel Ornament of Liberation class that the main root of anger was cut in working with the first paramita, generosity, and at some further level...

VR: That is not so. No. No.

Q: That is not so.

VR: Somebody gave you a bum steer. [Laughter] The root of anger is cut with patience.

Q: Thank you.

VR: Reluctant gentleman.

QUESTION: How about if you find you're always angry?

VR: I beg your pardon?

Q: If you find you're always angry.

VR: Find what?

Q: You find you are always angry.

VR: Always angry. You find you are always angry? That's what you find?

Q: I've been told that. [Laughter] I have the maras down pat. [Laughter] Your description's perfect. I just—

VR: Well, that usually means that the maras have you down pat.

Q: Yes.

VR: Oh, it's not all that far off as you think. Be careful of the illusion of these maras.

Q: How do you mean? I—

VR: Well, we are so easily seduced.

Q: You have a book I can read or something? I'm ... you know, I feel... they just seemed real visual. You know, as you were listing them—yes that's for me, that's what happens.

VR: I see. I see. Well, that's exactly what we're trying to do here, is to wake up.

Q: But how, I mean can you, well, my original question is, I am... about being angry.

VR: What is your original question?

Q: Being angry all the time.

VR: What is the question?

Q: Well, how do you conquer that? Yes, I mean, how do you just, you know, without kidding yourself?

VR: Do you practice meditation?

Q: You sent me a note once, a personal note.

VR: Oh, look who it is! Oh, my goodness. Oh, that's the personal note person. [Laughter] Oh, so you do have a sense of humor. Well, we all have this problem of being hard on ourselves. Very definitely hard on ourselves because we are lazy. We don't really want to penetrate to the nature of reality, to the naked truth. So we devise various entertainment. We have to begin at the beginning, always.

Q: Let me ask you one other thing, it's sort of personal, but then...

VR: Go ahead.

Q: Sure—it's only two hundred people.

VR: They might be sympathetic.

Q: No, I'll wait, I think.

VR: That's a good point. [Laughter]

Gentleman here.

QUESTION: You spoke about feeling anger on the spot and letting it go immediately. What about if you're in a situation, I can give an example of yesterday, of missing a plane at an airport and having to sit there for three or four hours until you can make a new connection and sitting there and getting angrier and angrier at oneself and I guess what I'm asking is if you're in a situation where it just doesn't seem easy to let it go right away because you're...

VR: That's where we have to develop this kind of discriminating mind that we're talking about. Because first of all, we have created a situation where we heap misery upon misery for several hours [laughter] for absolutely no reason. We missed the plane, the plane didn't miss us.

Q: It's just an excuse to continually get mad at oneself...

VR: It's a continual entertainment. But we don't realize how devastating that entertainment actually is, to one's state of mind; we take it so lightly, to get angry about missing the plane or missing the train or whatever it is, missing the appointment, but we don't realize how devastating that is and how much a repercussion it has on, on, on into our life, because it creates a pattern, which is called cause and effect, the law of karma. It creates a pattern. And we find no trouble in repeating that again and again, which is very painful. If we become just like vicious animals, to ourselves and to others. Again, as we said earlier, even if we build up such great kindness to people, still, if we have not conquered anger we become vicious in a moment, which starts the whole cycle again. So we have to actually develop a very, very clear discriminating mind, just like a fine thread. Egolessness of oneself, others and all of phenomena—takes tremendous patience to do that, and lots of practice. And you can practice at the airport, it's quite possible.

Here's [inaudible: Hala?], what do you know. Good evening.

QUESTION: Good evening, sir. What's the difference between humiliation and aloneness?

VR: Humiliation and aloneness.

Q: In a sense of...

VR: Just like a bird and wings. The bird is aloneness, the humiliation is the wings. If we are reading the same number here, I don't know. Do you want to elaborate?

Q: Okay. The more you step into the world and the more you see the moments of anger coming up because you're ... it's bouncing back on you, that somehow you're projecting your own aggression, very own passion or some subtlety and it's always bouncing back. So you can see that and it's very humiliating to see that and then that anger spreads further.

VR: Yes. Well, that's the same thing as saying it's humiliating to have wings if you're a bird, or to have legs and arms if you're a man. You see, we get angry because our projections come bouncing back on us. We get angry about that. But that's like saying I'm angry because I have arms and legs. The capacity of mind or the power of mind is to project. We get angry because that happens. Simply because we attach this notion of self to it. If you look at your hand, yes, is that what you might call the possession of yourself, that perception right now? Who does that belong to, that perception of looking at your hand?

Q: That's a hand with veins and blood, and it's part of the...

VR: Now you're talking to yourself. I was just talking about looking at your hand. I wasn't talking about talking to yourself. The simple perception of looking at your hand does not belong to anybody, particularly; it's just simply that. Yes, that's ... then it comes back—hand? [Laughter] My hand, veins, veins go up here to the heart, heart beats. I have to eat; I have to live; I can't go on. [Laughter] Warts. All kinds of things happen just from simple perception, yes. We have to have some patience with the whole thing, you see. The whole idea of developing patience is that simple perception is not distorted by the notion of ego. If you have arms and legs, you have aloneness and humiliation at the same time. There's no problem with humiliation. Humiliation, when you take it from the point of view of somebody watching, it's very distressing. But with nobody watching, means humbleness.

Q: Thank you, sir.

VR: Which is the same as aloneness.

QUESTION: In an earlier discussion you said there's a difference between being partially involved with your emotions and being totally involved with emotions or becoming one with your object of perception. I don't know if I've got that right, but what does that mean when you're angry...being totally angry means that you can let it go?

VR: No. We're not talking about that at all. We're talking about the arising of anger and ego. Ego and anger are associated, you see. There's no sense of fooling ourselves in thinking that we can let go of the arising of anger. That is not what we're talking about here. We're talking about the propensity to have anger arise altogether, cutting that.

Q: So is that to say that an enlightened person never experiences anger?

VR: That's correct.

Q: Thank you.

VR: They have other names for it. [Laughter] That's not particularly meant to be a joke. It's not particularly meant to be a joke. I'm talking about some sort of fineness in one's perception, that we very quickly would like to jump the gun and say that my anger is actually the wrathfulness of Mahakala. If you leave fish out for a little while, it begins to smell.

QUESTION: We've been talking about anger arising in us. But if I understood your talk correctly, then sometimes we don't give people very close to us, who are angry with us, the space they need, because somehow their anger against us makes us more solid.

VR: That's correct. That is absolutely correct.

Q: Thank you.

VR: Well, we have to discuss that further tomorrow in terms of working with how, when people are angry with us, because that's a whole further dimension below that. That's a whole further dimension of what we're talking about tonight, of how we actually practice the perfection of patience.

Q: Because some—the more close the person is to you who's angry with you, the more solidification you could get from them.

VR: Well, you have different gradations of relationships. You have people who are close to you, such as your parents, your wife, your children, and what not—anger coming that way. You have anger coming from associates and business people, friends, whatnot. Then you have anger coming from society in general, you know, people around you. How to work with all of those.

Q: Thank you.

VR: The third. Or is it the second?

QUESTION: I'm not sure what you mean.

VR: Well, go ahead.

Q: First.

VR: It better be good then. [Laughter]

Q: You spoke about all phenomena having no permanence, or all phenomena being impermanent?

VR: Yes. I said having no ego, but that's saying the same thing.

Q: Is that saying the same thing?

VR: Yes. Well, it's saying one part of the same thing, but go ahead.

Q: Well, in the last issue of the Vajradhatu Sun, they had an article by Shamar Rinpoche...

VR: Saying?

Q: That the continuity of mind was the basis of rebirth.

VR: Exactly.

Q: If things are impermanent, how can mind continue?

VR: The continuity of mind is the basis of rebirth. Right? Is that what you read?

Q: Pretty much so, yes.

VR: Well, the notion of mind in the general sense is the chain reaction of thought process. So that is the cause of rebirth, yes.

Q: So that process itself is mind. Is—

VR: No, we wouldn't say that. Nobody has yet to say what mind is.

Q: Do the Buddhists have a definition of mind?

VR: Nagarjuna has a definition of mind.

Q: What about as far as we're concerned?

VR: Well, as far as we're concerned, Nagarjuna says, "Mind is not this and not that; not both; not neither." How does it go? Is that it?

Q: Then is that another way of saying that mind doesn't exist?

VR: That's another way of saying that mind doesn't exist.

Q: Well, if it doesn't exist, then how can it continue?

VR: Why is it that you feel any kind of discomfort?

Q: Why do I feel discomfort?

VR: Any kind of discomfort.

Q: Well, because I'm ignorant.

VR: In that case, why are you ignorant?

Q: I don't know if that question makes any sense, but...

VR: Then why are you asking me about mind? If that question doesn't make any sense, then why ask about mind?

Q: The reason I was asking about mind is because I could understand—because mind is supposed to be the basis for rebirth. So like it seemed to me...

VR: Why is it that you feel discomfort?

Q: You mean right now? Or in general?

VR: Any time. Any time.

Q: Hmm. I guess somehow things aren't fitting into place that I think they should be fitting.

VR: How is it that you have a notion of things fitting into place?

Q: What do I mean by that, you mean?

VR: How is it that you have such a notion, that things should fit into place? I'm not trying to ask you a tricky question, I'm just asking you simply.

Q: I know, but I have to think about it for a minute.

VR: Here we go. [Laughter]

Q: It's a tough question.

VR: Here we go. Take your time.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

VR: Well, ladies and gentlemen, it's rather early. We should close our session. Now, in terms of this weekend, these four days, let me reiterate very straightforwardly and clearly that this particular lineage that I represent is called the Kagyü lineage. It's also called the practice lineage, that is to say, that mere words do not produce enlightenment. Neither do talks such as these. They may be helpful in sparking one's aspiration and inspiration, but when it comes down to the very basic fact, we must practice. In order to achieve any real genuine experience of awakened mind, one must practice.

So, please consider what we have discussed and please apply it to your daily meditation practice in the next few days. You already have the techniques involved, so I'm not asking you to apply anything differently. Let what we have talked about abide or rest in the environment, rather than in your thought process. You understand? What we have talked about—when you are practicing your shamatha, sitting practice—it's not necessary to think about what we are discussing. But, trust in your own mind and whatever arises will actually be spontaneously and completely visible. So trust in that, and please don't be angry with yourself if you don't feel things are going properly.

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