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Intensive Training Seminar (I.T.S.)
“The Life & Teachings of Naropa”

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Talk Two of Four
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VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN:

We have a two-fold expression of this particular path as walked on, experienced, and realized by the members, the participants, and the holders of the lineage, and we talked about that last night. That is devotion, born out of wisdom and exertion, commitment, practice.

So tonight we continue in our discussion of the life and teachings of Naropa. As we said last night that Naropa’s life and teachings are not separate, that his life is a teaching, is some kind of example for us, how we could practice. And so we see that Naropa’s experience—to begin with, we should be very clear about that—that Naropa was a very intelligent man and a very disciplined person. He had completely practiced and studied the hinayana-mahayana path and the tantras as well. He was accomplished in the tripitika, kept the vinaya completely, was revered and was respected as a great scholar and practitioner as well. But he felt some kind of self-deception going on. And he met his guru in the form of that ugly hag with thirty-seven ugly features. That was his vision of his own karmic pattern. At the same time, it was his commitment and aspiration to realize the ultimately real, realize the truth.

He was not deceived by any kind of self-congratulation of any kind. Therefore, when he saw that ugly hag with thirty-seven ugly features, he was struck, and the story goes, then she appeared to him and said, “Splendid Naropa, Abhayakirti,”—that was his name at the time—said, “you studied the dharma, do you understand the words or the sense?” And he said, “I only understand the words.” And she smiled and laughed. And then he said to himself, “Ha, she must be pleased with me.” And then he said, “But I also understand the sense.” Then she got furious and began to cough and spit. Then she disappeared. He was taken by that, his own self-deception. And then he absolutely knew that he had to seek out the ultimately real, the guru. Guru in this case means ultimately real, one’s own intrinsic awakened state of mind is the same as guru. But since we believe that things are outside and we seek our own projections as real, then guru is very important, because guru is personification of enlightenment and also personification of our own deception at the same time, which makes guru have thirty-seven ugly marks when we see for the first time.

I thought at this point it would be good to read a passage from *The Life and Teachings of Naropa*, which talks about how Naropa set out to find his guru, Tilopa. And how, as he went on his journey, he encountered his own version of things, over and over again. The notion here is that we see things, to begin with, clearly. But then we cover them over constantly with our version of things. And that version of things is based on habit-forming thoughts and accumulation of karmic tendencies from beginningless time. [For] as long as we can remember, we have been overlaying reality with our version of things, which sometimes is quite horrific, and sometimes seemingly beautiful, but, for the most part, we are constantly trying to make our version of things be true, rather than experience the truth itself. So Naropa determined, with great intellect and great commitment, to find the ultimately real guru.

The ultimately real and the guru in Naropa’s mind are same thing. He heard the word “Tilopa,” and his body tingled, hair stood on end, and said, that must be the guru. It was kind of the same thing as when you actually flash on the fact that things are real. Everything’s real, including your death. Flash for an instant—the whole thing is real. When he heard the word “Tilopa,” the name “Tilopa,” he flashed, “I must find this person.” We’re not talking about a romantic travelogue here, we’re talking about moment of complete awakening, awareness. Even a flash of awakening is a stepping stone to walk on the path. That’s intrinsic to this particular lineage, Kagyü lineage, which doesn’t believe in the ultimate scholar or ultimate practitioner or any of that. But a sense that every moment there’s a possibility of awakening, that

happens to us all the time, just in a flash. So Naropa actually experienced that. He saw his own projection coming back at him, and he saw his own self-deception, and he said, “I can’t go on lying to myself any longer, propping myself up as so and so, Mr. so and so, Mr. Abhayakirti, great scholar, great pandita. But I have to find out for myself if there’s anything real or not,” just as Buddha did, same lineage, same approach, same steps. So because Naropa was so intent, he actually experienced his mind, his own mind, in a very vivid way.

So I’d like Mr. [Steve] Baker to read—do we have a microphone here? You can sit there. You want to stand up? Sure, doesn’t matter, okay. I’d like Mr. Baker to read this passage of Naropa actually looking for Tilopa and what happened to him. And please pay attention to this. Is it 29? 29—yes, okay. “And he resolved at that point.”¹

MR. BAKER: [Reads]

When therefore he went further east in his search for the guru, his tutelary deity Chakrasamvara assured him, “Glorious Abhayakirti, I have given you my grace so that you may find the revered Tilopa. How will you win Buddhahood if you find not the guru? Search for Tilopa in the East, he is incarnate Buddhahood, the guru who will release your spirituality. Take then no heed of obstacles.” When he had heard these words he sang, “Tilopa, venerable guru, without you I cannot win Buddhahood. Whether or not I find you, from today I shall heed neither life nor body. Why, if undeterred by obstacles should I not find the promised guru?”

VR: Okay, at that point he had never seen Tilopa, just heard his name. And so many times in our experience we hear this idea of a guru, and we hear the popular American fantasy and believe in a myth, that guru is some kind of myth, that you should sit down and wash the feet, sit around and listen to the words of the guru, kind of thing. Now, here’s a person who’s actually never seen guru at all. But his commitment was such that he said that how can I ever achieve Buddhahood, if I don’t find you? So that’s kind of basic, beginning of journey. That we’re not talking about any kind of parlor game at all.

SB: [Reads]

And he proceeded onwards in an eastern direction. These were the visions he had: When he had come to a narrow footpath that wound between rocks and a river, he found a leper woman without hands and feet blocking the path.

¹ Add citation for the quoted passages.

“Do not block the way, step aside.”

“I cannot move, go around if you are not in a hurry. But if you are, jump over me.”

Although he was full of compassion, he closed his nose in disgust and leaped over her. The leper woman rose in the air in a rainbow halo and said, “Listen Abhayakirti, the ultimate, in which all become the same, is free of habit-forming thought and limitations. How, if still fettered by them, can you hope to find the guru?”

VR: That’s the next stage. That in looking for the guru, he actually confronts his own disgust and his own revulsion and tries to apply some kind of strategy to that, which is his basic notion of compassion, because he’s well studied in the mahayana and knows he should have compassion for these ugly things that are around. And yet, on the other hand, he decides to close his nose and jump over and make some kind of strategy. But as he jumps over, the leper woman appears and says, “If you’re still fettered by habit-forming thoughts, how can you ever find the ultimately real?”

SB: [Reads]

At this the woman, the rocks and path all vanished, and Naropa fell into a swoon on a sandy plateau.

VR: He fainted.

SB: [Reads]

When he recovered consciousness he thought, “I did not recognize this to be the guru, now I shall ask anyone I meet for instruction.”

VR: So second thing is some kind of strategy that comes up. He has some kind of flash of awareness. He says, “This vision I saw was actually Tilopa.” He’s getting smarter, see? He’s actually getting more [inaudible: in tune? attuned?] on his journey. That vision he actually saw, he said, “I didn’t recognize this on the spot.” Which happens to all of us all the time. We have some kind of negativity, happens to us, happens it comes up in a flash—anger, passion, something—disgust. And we say to ourselves after a while, “I didn’t recognize this as actually the very time to practice,” right? Very time, “I didn’t recognize this, so I’m going to try that again next time it comes up.”

SB: [Reads]

Then he got up and went on his way praying.

On a narrow road he met a stinking bitch crawling with vermin. He closed his nose and jumped over the animal, which then appeared in the sky in a rainbow halo and said:

*All living beings by nature are one's parents.
How will you find the guru, if
Without developing compassion
On the mahayana path, you seek in the wrong direction?*

VR: That kind of approach is basically saying that, your enlightenment that you're seeking, if you're seeking it for yourself, you are like a stinking bitch, full of vermin. That you really haven't understood that enlightenment cannot be achieved for oneself. You think you're practicing the mahayana path, but when you see something disgusting, it makes you sick and you try to get around it again—another kind of strategy. That mahayana path is basically for, one's own enlightenment is for others. Even if it's disgusting and stinking and rotting, still, you dedicate your existence to that. So what's happening here is that this particular projection of Naropa is saying back to himself, do you think you're such a great mahayanist, you're practicing this? If you're still not committed to sentient beings, you'll never find the guru.

SB: [Reads]

*How will you find the guru to accept you
When you look down on others?
After these words the bitch and the rocks disappeared, and Naropa
again swooned on a sandy plateau.
When he came to—*

VR: He fainted again.

SB: Fainted on a sandy plateau.

VR: Passed out.

SB: Dropped.

VR: Got confused. [Laughter]

SB: Got confused. [Reads]

When he came to, he resumed his prayers and his journey and met a man carrying a load.

“Have you seen the venerable Tilopa?”

“I have not seen him, however, you will find, behind this mountain, a man playing tricks on his parents. Ask him.”

When he had crossed the mountain he found the man who said, “I have seen him, but before I tell you, help me to turn my parent’s head.”

But Abhayakirti thought, “Even if I should not find the venerable Tilopa, I cannot associate with a scoundrel, because I am a prince, a Bhikshu and a scholar. If I seek the guru, I will do so in a respectable way, according to the dharma.”

VR: So, sense of oneself as a practitioner, sense of one’s existence as a Buddhist. That’s Abhayakirti here. Someone wants to do a dirty deal. He said, “I can’t do that, because I’m actually true, upright, I have good conduct as a Buddhist. I do things properly, you know. I can’t engage in this dirty stuff. I can’t make this tricky deal, especially somebody trying to trick their parents.” One’s parents are actually the notion of the bodhisattva path, giving oneself to others. So he doesn’t want to indulge in that. But he has, at the same time, some kind of sense of uprightness and self-esteem.

SB: [Reads]

Everything happened as before. The man receded into the center of a rainbow halo, and said:

*How will you find the guru, if
In this doctrine of great compassion
You do not crack the skull of egotism
With the mallet of non-Pure Egoness and nothingness?*

VR: So whole idea is if you’re holding on to yourself as a practitioner, as a Buddhist, then you’re actually holding on to some sense of ego.

SB: [Reads]

The man disappeared like a rainbow, and Naropa fell senseless to the ground. When he woke up there was nothing, and he went on, praying as he went.

Beyond another mountain he found a man who was tearing the intestines out of a human corpse and cutting them up. Asked whether he had seen Tilopa he answered,

“Yes, but before I show him to you, help me to cut up the intestines of this decayed corpse.”

Since Naropa did not do so, the man moved away, into the center of a rainbow colored light and said:

*How will you find the guru, if
You cut not samsara’s ties
With the unoriginatedness of the ultimate
In its realm of non-reference?*

VR: So the whole point there is that when you have discriminating neurosis of what’s good and bad, that you can actually never find the guru, never find one’s own sense of ultimately real being, because you’re constantly cutting up the corpse of ego and tasting it—good and bad. This is a good thing, this is a bad thing. And you’re vacillating, going back and forth all the time. This disgusting, this is good. And somebody says, “Well, eat this,” and you refuse it, because it’s bad. But you take this because it’s good, you see? And then going back and forth all the time. And this, Naropa comes upon somebody tearing out his intestines, who says, “Help me do this. Sit down, we’ll do that.” It’s definitely bad. But that kind of commitment that’s necessary to achieve enlightenment actually has to go further than that.

SB: [Reads]

And the man disappeared like a rainbow.

When Naropa had recovered from his swoon and gone on his way praying, he found on the bank of a river a rascal, who had opened the stomach of a live man and was washing it with warm water. When he asked him whether he had seen the venerable Tilopa he replied, “Yes, but before I show him, help me.” Again, Naropa refused, and the man appearing in the center of light in the sky said:

*How will you find the guru, if
With the water of profound instruction
You cleanse not samsara, which by nature free,
Yet represents the dirt of habit-forming thoughts?*

VR: Whole notion here is that you have the instructions, but you refuse to apply them. That you’ve come so far on the path, and the instructions are given to you, but when the opportunity comes to actually wash out samsara’s mess, you refuse—you hold back, and you wouldn’t actually apply the practice that will actually cleanse

the whole thing. You hold back from it, and don't wash this intestine, this intestine of ego, you hold back from it.

SB: [Reads]

And the man disappeared in the sky.

After having awoken from his swoon, Naropa prayed and journeyed on until he came to a city of a great king, whom he asked whether he had seen Tilopa. The king replied, "I have seen him, but marry my daughter before I show him to you."

Having taken her, he seemed to spend a long time. Then the king, not wishing to let him go, took back the girl and the dowry and left the room. Not recognizing this as a magic spell, but thinking he would have to employ force with the aid of the Abhidhana-uttara tantra, he heard a voice say:

Are you not deceived by a magic show?

How then will you find the guru

If through desire and dislike, you fall

Into the three forms of evil life?

VR: So again, Naropa is deceived by, in this case, pleasure. That pleasure seems to be the most difficult thing in a human being's life to experience. In this case, the ultimately real is presented as the king's daughter, ultimately real. And if you take this ultimately real daughter of mine, which is Naropa's still looking for the guru takes the form of the king's daughter, then you can actually be there, actually experience being happy. So he takes this daughter, but what happens?

SB: *And the whole kingdom disappeared.*

VR: Absolutely, that he was holding on to some kind of sense of pleasure at understanding something, you see? That if you actually do have experience of dharma, something very real and straightforward, and you take pleasure in that, then you have actually ego, deception. That you have taken pleasure in that. And then the whole thing disappears again, as soon as you do that. So that experience Naropa had.

SB: [Reads]

When Naropa came to, he traveled in prayer until he met a dark man with a pack of hounds, a bow and arrows.

"Have you seen Tilopa?"

“Yes.”

“Show him to me.”

“Take this bow and arrow and kill that deer.”

When Naropa refused, the man said:

*A hunter, I have drawn the arrow
of the phantom body, which from desires is free
in the bow, of radiant light the essence:
I shall kill the fleeing deer of this and that,
on the mountain of the body believing in an I.
Tomorrow I go fishing in the lake.*

VR: Now we're talking about some kind of transcendence that Naropa's experiencing, beyond pleasure and pain. He's talking about—say it again?

SB: “I shall kill the fleeing deer”?

VR: That's it. Some kind of commitment is actually happening at this point. That he can't believe in pleasure and pain anymore. That he's actually experienced some kind of commitment that's necessary to actually kill sense of, actually eradicate, dismiss, undo ego, entirely. “I shall kill the fleeing deer of this and that.” “I shall kill the fleeing deer of this and that” means Naropa's actually coming to, waking up. This particular vision of his is his own mind, you see? The whole thing we've been talking about is all fantasies we go through all the time. What we're listening to is our own mind, and fantasies we go through all the time. And eventually, he's stunned to wake up, you see? That I actually must kill that deer of this and that, because I've been dreaming so long, that I have to make some commitment to kill this particular deer, in other words, practice.

SB: [Reads]

So saying, he disappeared.

When Naropa had recovered he continued prayerfully in search of the guru, and came to the shore of a lake full of fish. Nearby two old people were plowing a field, killing and eating the insects they found in the furrows.

“Have you seen Tilopa?”

“He stayed with us, but before I show him to you, hello wife, come and get this bhikshu something to eat.”

VR: Bhikshu is monk.

SB: [Reads]

The old wife took some fish and frogs from her net and cooked them alive. When she invited Naropa to eat he said, "Since I am a bikshu, I no longer have an evening meal, and beside that I do not eat meat." Thinking, "I must have violated the doctrine of the Buddha to be asked to dine by an old woman who cooks fish and frogs alive," he sat there miserably. Then the old man came up with an ox on his shoulders and asked, "Have you prepared some food for the bhikshu?" She replied, "He seems to be stupid; I cooked some food, but he said that he did not want to eat."

Then the old man threw the pan into the fire, while the fish and frogs flew up into the sky. He said:

*Fettered by habit-forming thoughts, it is hard to find the guru.
How will you find the guru if you eat not
This fish of habit-forming thoughts, but hanker
After pleasures which enhance the sense of ego?
Tomorrow I will kill my parents.*

VR: Now we come right down to it, when you practice, come right down to it, of passion, aggression, ignorance. What comes up, what arises in one's mind is eating the insects and cooking this food. And refusing to take part in the whole thing is what we actually do, refuse to take part in the whole notion of our life. And passion, aggression, and ignorance come up, and such insect-like, such fried bugs of our life, refusing to take part, is basically the ultimate refusal to wake up. She said, "I cooked him some food, but he seems to be stupid." That's what happens with us when we practice. That we have some food, which is our mind, we have some food, but we refuse to eat. We try to view meditation practice as some kind of stopping point, something that can actually, can cut off our notion of ourselves by applying gauze and Band-Aids. That's not the point [abruptly strikes the arm of his chair with fan], absolutely not [strikes chair with fan] the point. That this woman and man, eating the insects, cooking this food, and Naropa wouldn't eat because he was refusing to recognize what actually happens in one's mind.

SB: [Reads]

He then disappeared.

After his recovery Naropa came upon a man who had impaled his father on a stake, put his mother into a dungeon, and was about to kill them. They cried loudly, "Oh son, do not be so cruel." Although Naropa revolted at the site, he asked the man whether he had seen Tilopa, and was answered,

"Help me to kill the parents who have brought me misfortune and I will then show you Tilopa."

But since Naropa felt compassion for the man's parents, he did not make friends with this murderer. Then with the words:

*You will find it hard to find the guru
If you kill not the three poisons that derive
From your parents, the dichotomy of this and that.
Tomorrow I will go and beg.*

VR: The parents of our ego are passion, aggression, and ignorance, called kleshas. The parents of our world in ourselves, basically ignorance, which transforms or produces itself into passion, aggression, and ignorance, the three poisons, kleshas. And this vision says if you don't kill your parents, in other words, if you don't kill the origination of ego, how will you ever find the ultimately real? Now, maybe this is strong medicine for you, but I don't consider you to be babies. You're human beings, you have experienced something already. This is getting very close to the heart, so to speak. That, if you don't kill that passion, aggression, and ignorance—by killing doesn't mean getting a hammer and beating something over the head. It means killing by not saying yes to neurosis. And Naropa was trying to still strategize, up to the very last, trying to find Tilopa. He's still trying to strategize. In the vision he has people putting father and mother on a stake, father on a stake and mother boiling in a pot, whatever it is, I forget. But it's kind of so gross that your own parents you're killing. Your own parents in this case is your own sense of who you are.

SB: [Reads]

The man disappeared.

When Naropa had recovered from his swoon and gone on in prayer, he came to a hermitage. One of the inmates recognized him as Abhayakirti and asked, "Why have you come, is it to meet us?"

"I am merely a kusulipa; there is no need for a reception."

VR: Kusulipa is the one who does three things: eat, sleep and shit, piss. So shit and piss go together. Kusulipa means someone who does that.

SB: [Reads]

The hermit, however, did not heed his words and received him with due honors. Asked for the reason of his coming Naropa said, "I seek Tilopa, have you seen him?"

"You will find that your search has come to an end. Inside is a beggar who claims to be Tilopa."

Naropa found him within, sitting by the fire and frying live fish. When the hermits saw this, they began angrily to beat the beggar, who asked, "Don't you like what I do?"

"How can we, when evil is done in a hermitage?"

The beggar snapped his fingers and said, "Lohivagaja," and the fish returned to the lake. Naropa, realizing that this man must be Tilopa, folded his hands and begged for instruction. The guru passed him a handful of lice, saying:

*If you would kill the misery of habit-forming thoughts
And ingrained tendencies on the endless path
To the ultimate nature of all beings,
First you must kill these lice.*

But when Naropa was unable to do so, the man disappeared with the words:

*You will find it hard to find the guru
If you kill not the louse of habit-forming thoughts,
Self-originated and self-destructive.
Tomorrow I will visit a freak show.*

VR: If you don't make friends with yourself, there's no way to continue with this path—that's very important. Eat the lice of your habit-forming thoughts. If you disdain and stay away from the dinner table of your own mind, how will you ever continue? You see these lice? That's your negativity. If you don't eat them, how can you continue? Then you'll believe in *things*, like Ebell, Los Angeles, and smog, and the world, and Venus and Mars, and all the rest of it, and satellites and Russia and the U.S. and Afghanistan and oil, and all of it—you'll believe in all of it if you don't make friends with yourself, finally. If you don't eat those habit-forming thoughts,

and lice is basically your fundamental notion of yourself. Tomorrow we visit a freak show.

SB: [Reads]

Dejectedly, Naropa got up and continued his search. Coming to a wide plain he found many one-eyed people, a blind man with sight, and an earless one who could hear, a man without a tongue speaking, a lame man running about, and a corpse gently fanning itself. When Naropa asked them whether they had seen Tilopa, they declared,

“We haven’t seen him or anyone else. If you really want to find him do as follows:

*Out of confidence, devotion and certainty, become
A worthy vessel, a disciple with the courage of conviction.
Cling to the spirituality of a teacher and the spiritual fold,
Wield the razor of intuitive understanding as the viewpoint,
Ride the horse of bliss and radiance as the method of attention,
Free yourself from the bonds of this and that as the way of conduct.
Then shines the sun of self-luster, which understands
One-eyedness as the quality of many,
Blindness as seeing without seeing a thing,
Deafness as hearing without hearing a thing,
Muteness as speaking without saying something,
Lameness as moving without being hurried,
Death’s immobility as the breeze of the unoriginated, like air moved by a fan.*

In this way the symbols of Mahamudra were pointed out, whereafter everything disappeared.

VR: Read it again. This is Naropa’s final giving up process, so please sit up and listen to this.

SB: [Reads]

Dejectedly, Naropa got up and continued his search.

VR: Got up! Please, got up, and continued his search, dejectedly. Got up and continued his search. So basically, everybody’s playing around, but he didn’t—got up.

SB: [Reads]

Coming to a wide plain he found many one-eyed people, a blind man with sight, and an earless one who could hear, a man without a tongue speaking, a lame man running about, and a corpse gently fanning itself.

VR: Okay. Let's talk about those images, say them again—"many one-eyed people."

SB: [Reads]

A blind man with sight, an earless one who could hear, a man without a tongue speaking, and a lame man running about.

VR: And a corpse gently fanning itself. This is kind of a sense when we confront the notion of concept and projections as basically double-twist. That what we think is, isn't. What we think isn't, is. When we actually come in contact with egolessness for the first time, we understand egolessness. So, blind man can see, lame can walk, corpse fans itself. So nothing is real or unreal at that point, just simply totally turned around. That your consciousness, what you think you exist as, is completely juxtaposed to your own thought patterns. What you think you exist as is contrasted to your own thought patterns. You think one thing and you produce another, and whole thing switches around.

SB: [Reads]

*When Naropa asked them whether they had seen Tilopa, they declared,
"We haven't seen him or anyone else. If you really want to find him do as follows:*

*Out of confidence, devotion and certainty, become
A worthy vessel, a disciple with the courage of conviction.
Cling to the spirituality of a teacher and the spiritual fold,
Wield the razor of intuitive understanding as the viewpoint,
Ride the horse of bliss and radiance as the method of attention,
Free yourself from the bonds of this and that as the way of conduct.
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Deafness as hearing without hearing a thing,
Muteness as speaking without saying something,
Lameness as moving without being hurried,
Death's immobility as the breeze of the unoriginated, like air moved by a fan."*

In this way the symbols of Mahamudra were pointed out, whereafter everything disappeared.

VR: Whereafter everything disappeared.

Well, okay, if you have any questions, we could have discussion at this point. Over here? I didn't want to go through those last things yet, we'll do that tomorrow, when the confirmation happens, of Naropa. Now what?

QUESTION: What does it mean to eat the lice of your negativity?

VR: Well, basically, it means if you don't make friends with your own habit-forming thought, your own negative visions of yourself, then you have no possible way of proceeding further. Making friends with that means not trying to dislodge, dismiss, or in any way try to change them into something else. But the lice are your own tendency to be ignorant, to fester and just be a little insect of yourself. Even that disgusting thing, you must embrace and become friends with. If you're not willing to take part in that, how can you achieve enlightenment if you think you can escape—a little corner? That's what happened to Naropa—thought there was just this little corner, didn't need to be attended to. But it does. You know, those little things that go on, very simple little things go on in your mind, you sort of dismiss them. But you can't, you cannot.

QUESTION: I had a really hard time getting away from the literalness of the story—

VR: Why? Why should you get away from it? It's very literal.

Q: Well, the interpretation seems so much different than—

VR: It's very literal. The interpretation is made for babies who like baby food. Well, it depends on you. If you want to take it literally, you'll be much more strong. If you want baby food, well, we'll try to accommodate.

Q: Then wasn't he actually doing things that he had been—

VR: He's doing exactly what it said. [Pause] Don't we?

Q: I don't know.

VR: Really? We do exactly that—blow our nose, stuff like that.

Q: This was more than blowing our nose.

VR: Think so?

Q: It seemed that way, yes.

VR: What did it seem like, oh? Whatever, seemed like a good story. What happens to you? If you think that that story's so fantastic, be interesting to hear yours, bit by bit. Think about this Naropa's story, his is taken down bit-by-bit how it happened. It sounds fantastic. Well, there's a lot of them right here. Probably not that much practice and discipline. That's the difference, you see? When you think about Naropa, when that happened to him, that's only the beginning. He had such an inquisitive mind, because he had such disciplined practice already. We're [inaudible: not?] talking about the same thing, are we?

Q: It seemed that some of his replies, that they had to do with the discipline that he had.

VR: Absolutely, he had some kind of—that's what we talked about originally: devotion and awareness. That he had commitment to go further because he's actually searching for what's called ultimately real. In this case, guru is the ultimately real, embodiment of that. If there's no embodiment of that, then it's kind of dream-like business, by the way. And commitment, discriminating awareness, that when something happened to him, it wasn't simply out of context, you see? That's what happens to us. Something happens out of context. You say, "I lost my car today, somebody stole it." Or "I broke my foot," or "My father died," or "I lost my \$10,000 savings," or "I lost ten dollars on the street," or "I lost the tie I just bought," or, or, or—out of context, completely. Everybody thinks that things are just happening, bing, bing bing, you know, just sort of popping up. There's complete context for the whole thing. That's what Naropa had, some kind of discriminating awareness. When something happened to him in his life, he didn't just let it pass by. He said, "Well, let me see, what's this?" Not so much analyzing, but symbolically saying, "What's this?" Symbolic means some kind of intuition about what's happening. So these visions he had were actually confronting his own projections about what's real. That's what happens to all of us. We have these visions of our life, you know? You think this is a real room?

Q: Yes.

VR: Yes, you do? What's it made of, huh?

Q: Doesn't matter.

VR: Really? Doesn't? Is it stone, is it wood? How far off the ground is it that we're sitting right now? How many feet off the earth are we sitting? How many feet off the floor are you sitting? Four? Two? How many feet from the top of your head to the ceiling? How much light is coming down from this light? How real is my voice? How

real is the microphone you're holding in your fingers? It doesn't matter? I doubt it. I think it matters a lot. Well, we can't bullshit ourselves, you know. Whether we know it or not, something's happening here. And nobody's going to profit.

Anybody else? Nobody gets any profit. You visit your own projection. [To audience member] Hey, just wake up, okay? Just stay that way, don't get lost [laughs]. Easy, huh? Something comes [inaudible: to? from?] the left. Don't get lost. Sit up, please sit up. Just don't be rigid, stay awake, please. Question?

QUESTION: Throughout Naropa's searching for different things and finding—

VR: Not different things. He's searching for Tilopa, not different things.

Q: Tilopa, was he—

VR: Wait, wait, wait. Do you understand different things and Tilopa? He's not searching for different things. He's not an amusement park person, particularly. He wants the real, ultimately real, okay? So, what do you mean by different things? What do you think Naropa is searching for by saying "different things"?

Q: Being unsatisfied with what he finds at the time, and he keeps searching.

VR: That's not quite right, you see. That's what you think. It's not so much that he's even concerned with being unsatisfied. He's concerned with self-deception, always. If he doesn't find ultimately real, if he hears echo of himself, he still goes on: find Tilopa. Tilopa's ultimately real guru.

Q: In between times, does he, did he actually—

VR: There aren't any. There aren't any. Anybody else?

QUESTION: The king's daughter—I didn't understand. Did you say that—

VR: Pleasure.

Q: —was the hardest to accept?

VR: That's right. It's another one along the way, but basically, hardest one, yes. So what? Make a big deal out of that?

Q: I don't know if it's a big deal, I just don't understand it.

VR: Uh huh, among other things, eh, that you don't understand [inaudible]. Basically, we shouldn't be too interested in particular things. When you develop some kind of discriminating awareness, then things become potent. At this point you [are] just fishing around trying to knit a sweater.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, the whole point is we are confronted with our own version of reality, very much so, when we begin to practice, we are confronted with our own version of reality. And that means that we begin to understand or begin to experience that our mind, what we know as ourselves and our mind, that's basically the same thing, projects itself on empty space and starts to feed back what we would like to hear, what we would not like to hear, or what we would like to ignore—three things. What we would like to hear, what we would not like to hear, what we would like to ignore, comes back to us in a constant play, which sort of creates a universe of this kind of columns and drapes and Ebell Theater, as we think it's real, you know? Basically, as Naropa's stories, we are confronted with our own version of reality all the time, sometimes terrifying, sometimes beautiful, sometimes boring, sometimes irritating. But we are confronted constantly in our commitment with our own version of reality. Whether or not we think it's true or not true doesn't really matter. The point is we are confronted constantly with our own version of reality, and that if you begin to practice this particular path, especially Kagyü path, which is not noted for cheapness. In fact, it's not even noted for being aesthetically pleasing. It's touching down on the earth. That it may be frightening, may have lovely view, may be turbulent, may be calm. But basically, you are confronting your own version of reality all the time. Devotion and awareness, based on one's own intelligence. Devotion means making friends with oneself at this point. And awareness or exertion, having made friends with oneself, to continue to seek what is ultimately real.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Please practice tomorrow, no matter who you are.

[END OF RECORDING]