

Sudden Glimpse: the Appearance of Awakened Mind in Everyday Life

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There is a tendency in hearing the description of awakened mind, in creating an abstract picture. And that tendency is part of our accumulated habit of making our whole life abstract. In other words, we actually don't really see things as they are. We see things as our version. In other words, our experience always becomes abstract because of conceptual thinking, because of habitual conceptual planning and scheming. Even when we hear teachings which strike a certain note, which actually ring true, we convert them into dry concept, to abstract, philosophical, psychological, material language. Those three situations, those three tones, are called the Three Lords of Materialism. In other words, direct experience being automatically, seemingly automatically, translated into personal territory, possessiveness, by freezing the moment, freezing that sense of raw glimpse into our personal, static, solid world. Whether it's physical, psychological or spiritual, it's the same thing.

Yesterday, we discussed the description of awakened mind in terms of the teachings, and those words we used - unborn, unoriginated, unobstructed, non-dwelling - have immediately become monuments to our own ignorance. I'm not trying to put any blame on anyone at this point. It's not a matter of innate stupidity of the animals in the pen. That's what we've been led to believe. It is simply the process of habitual stuck, habitual constipation, of not having any real trust, any real confidence in our own intelligence.

My dear friends, unless we have one hundred percent conviction in the truth that intelligence, which is our basic nature, our birthright, can be liberated, that intelligence will continually circle around and around and create its own version of things, create its own Disneyland. Disneyland is a very good image, Disneyworld. And I'm not trying to be cute and appeal to all of us as liberal intellectuals who can really be snide and sneer at Disneyworld, because Disneyworld also has the same intelligence as our preconceptions, as our quality of being stuck in a fantasy.

So, what do we do actually? What do we do? How can that teaching and experience combine together to produce enlightened action, in other words, living in the world, being in the world in a continuous meditative state of mind? We have usually two options. For ourselves, we think always in two ways. No matter how sophisticated we are, we always think in these ways. If that is the case, what we have understood and practiced, my alternative then is to sit on this zafu forever, because that is the only real true experience. As soon as I get up, walk around, immediately something jumps on my back which is called my past or my hope for the future. The other train of thought is that it is impossible to do anything at all. If you have this state of mind you'll be bouncing off columns, walking in the street, hit by a car, because we're so into unborn, undwelling, that we're bound to be hit by a truck. Can't figure out the change for a maga-

zine: fifteen, twenty (laughter) - it's all unborn, unceasing,...(laughter). That's, that's immediately what we think.

Or actually then there's the third one, which is just a matter of forgetting the whole thing entirely. It's all just another bunch of words, somebody else's trip laid on me - Buddhist, in this case. And say, sure, Buddha had this experience, you know, and a lot of people listened to him and thought they understood what he said, and so neurosis was passed on for two thousand five hundred years, same way it is with us. What's the difference? Everyday life. Everyday life is always either searching for pleasure, avoiding pain, or ignoring the whole thing. Now how can we develop real conviction in a glimpse? A glimpse is just a glimpse, as we talked about yesterday, sudden and just a glimpse-like flash. How to develop conviction so that our everyday life is the embodiment of that awakened state of mind? What we're talking about is meditation in action. And what we're talking about is some sense of practicality in dealing with the world, in dealing with our version of the world, our world.

Very simply, it goes like this: sitting practice of meditation was come upon by Buddha himself. Realizing that there's no such thing as a permanent essence, no such thing as a continuing identity and realizing that beings of all states and all classes were confused about that very basic fact, he introduced a practice which is identical with the state of mind being talked about. The sitting practice of meditation has no purpose and no origin and no result. There is nothing difficult about it. It is the simplest possible experience of human beings: breathing. Introducing this practice is the occasion to experience directly a state of mind which is unencumbered by conceptual thinking. How does that happen? Very simply like this: you sit, breath out, go out with the breath, breath dissolves into space; come back, breath out, breath dissolves into space, come back. As you do that you have, to begin with, conceptions about "me" the meditator and my breath, breathing out, then my breath is going out. I'm going out, going out. I'm following it. It's me. I'm it. I'm not, it feels, out, out, dissolve into space (snaps fingers) gap. Come back. How did I get here? Beginning meditators always say, "What do I do about (sound of inhaling) this? How do I get around the (sound of inhaling)?" That's the same problem we have throughout our lives. How do we get around that (sound of inhaling) panic of having experienced sudden glimpse of no-self? When you practice continually, you practice because you heard the teachings of unconditioned mind. And when you heard it, you felt it. You experienced it from a flash in a moment.

Forget about the words unborn, unoriginated, non-dwelling, unobstructed. When you heard those words, you had experience of mind, or should say totality, which is free, which is real, which has no echo. Just for a flash, you had that experience. In meditation practice, what you've done and what everybody does, is try to imitate, try to duplicate that flash, that basic understanding that you had when you heard those teachings. That is how everybody comes to meditation practice. Nobody's excluded there. Everybody comes to meditation practice because that teaching that they heard was totally true in a moment. There was no thought, no self. There was just complete totality in a flash, in a moment. So we bring that into our practice along with our house and car and parents and wardrobe and pairs of underwear and ties and stockings and childhood friends, dreams of glory, dreams of great meditation, all the rest of it. But that's basically how we get there, how we start. And we're trying to imitate it. As we meditate, we try to imitate that unborn, unoriginated, and make it into something abstract. But the truth is that flash is raw, quite raw. It has teeth and nails because of our memory. The teeth and nails of that experience are called memory. Now this memory is not bad, in fact, it is good. It is good because it bites on something. It grates on something. It grates on something we call "ourselves". It's like

a flea bite, or having crabs. It's right in the skin, this experience of unborn, from the point of memory.

So memory, if we follow, if we can follow, memory is taken up as technique of meditation practice. That's what you do with your memory. What you do with your memory, your past, your karmic consequence, shall we say, is apply it to breathing: out, dissolve, out, dissolve - very basic memory. In doing so, with continued practice you begin to recognize that sudden glimpse as something not so sudden, but maybe still a glimpse. And with continued discipline, you begin to recognize that there is some similarity between the memory and the glimpse, in other words, between technique and the experience of the technique. Everybody following? Well, try. Try. As you practice, you begin to see that there is some similarity between the technique and the experience of the technique. And as you practice further, perhaps you begin to see that the technique and the experience become the same thing. And that sudden glimpse becomes meditative state of mind.

Now this is not simply a door prize for being at this ITS. It means that if you practice in such a way, that will happen. And if it does happen and you can actually identify that from what memory remains, then you begin to develop conviction in the truth. You cannot any longer have allegiance to a lie. And everywhere you go, you bring that truth with you, and every time you try to create a lie, that truth comes back as memory, full circle.

So a real practitioner begins to get a sense of confidence that that truth is not separate from himself. In other words, he himself, she herself, is the teaching, is Buddha. Buddha means awake. And we begin to have that kind of a sneaking suspicion which becomes sense of being awake all the time, even when you're drunk, even when you're depressed, even when you're really excited, even when you're horrified at the atrocities of the world, even when you're lyrical and sentimental, even when you're resentful and arrogant. That sense of awake is rubbing constantly. A small spark, one little flame, begins to burn, which ignites the entire conceptual mind.

This is how practice works. This is how the Buddha experienced and taught. The way to recognize it for beginners, hah, anybody, is that ordinarily as you walk along in your life that sense of sitting practice flashes back to you in a moment and your ordinary, relative mind says, "that how I felt when I was sitting." You're slicing a vegetable. You're writing your name on a check. You're buying a theatre ticket. You're dialing the telephone. And in a flash (snaps his fingers) you have that memory, which comes as a feeling of as it was when you were sitting this afternoon. That is unconditional mind occurring, occurring in the space of habitual thinking. So you begin to recognize that more and more. And the more you recognize, the more the experience of sitting practice and everyday life become blended together as one experience, one thing, one sense of tremendous confidence that you possess buddha-mind, enlightened mind. And that to unfold that mind completely is a question of walking on a path of real discipline, which is neither militaristic nor wishy-washy, but which is that sense of coming back, back here.

Shall we have a discussion?

QUESTION: I had two short questions, one from your speech of yesterday. You said yesterday that the enlightened mind is pain. Are you saying that that's intrinsic to enlightened mind as opposed to pleasure which is not intrinsic to enlightened mind or is it an interpretation you put onto enlightened mind?

VAJRA REGENT: Enlightened mind is pain. First glimpse, sudden glimpse - what happens?

Q: Pain.

VR: Panic. If I were to say, "enlightened mind is pleasure," boy, would we be in trouble.

Q: But when you, when enlightened mind is extended beyond the first glimpse, like in your discussion –

VR: Uh-huh

Q: - of today, when it extends into everyday life. Is it still, this expansion of perspective, is this associated with pain necessarily?

VR: It is said in the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism, of our particular lineage, that one actually discovers the First Noble Truth in the Vajrayana.

Q: Could you, I don't understand.

VR: Well, basically, what you've been hearing from me is how to tie your shoe - not even that - that you have a shoe and it needs laces, and which is very embarrassing, for all of us. That's why we feel so intelligent all of a sudden. Of course I know we need shoes. But, of course I know you know that. What I'm saying is that in order to do it properly this time, to have real dedication to the truth, not to a lie, we have to start with the shoelaces and the shoes. Whether or not pleasure is enlightened mind remains to be seen. But at this point we can safely say that pain is the only signal of being awake that we know.

Q: The other question that I had was the relationship of drugs and alcohol to meditation. That is, what, is there a destructive relationship between meditation and drugs or alcohol?

VR: You mean other than the rest of life?

Q: No, not, well, what I mean is, the ob...in sitting -

VR: Sitting practice?

Q: Yes.

VR: Yes.

Q: And in attempting to recognize, you know, the true reality -

VR: Whatever it is.

Q: Yeah. Is alcohol and drugs counterproductive to either this, this recognition of realization within sitting or the extension of it in everyday life?

VR: Well, you see, the point there is that everything we have in terms of everyday life is jumbled together in such a confused state that we can't tell the difference between one and the other. So the question comes up, "If I take drugs, will I get there quicker or lesser? If I drink the opposite, blah, blah,,blah. If I eat too much at dinner, will that affect my meditation? If my spine is crooked, bla-bla-blah, bla-bla-blah. The point is that meditation practice is the only time when none of those things apply. You just: breath, sit, breath. Is that your question?

Q: Not quite.

VR: Are you asking me whether you should get drunk before you sit?

Q: No well not before you sit. Okay. Beyond, all right, you sit, right?

VR: Yeah.

Q: But one, you also want to extend your sudden glimpse into everyday life. Right?

VR: You do? Yes, you do. That's right! You absolutely do!

Q: You therefore, does alcohol and drugs –

VR: Extend that glimpse?

Q: - or are they counterproductive?

VR: Well, I mean, the same thing as mashed potatoes at this point. I mean, if that's your intention, taking a shit is as good as smoking a joint, in terms of you take a shit and you feel much better. I mean, pardon me; but don't. You're talking the same thing. Any kind of phenomenal experience that you have, you can interpret as extending your awareness of unconditioned mind. But it's all complete hypocrisy, the whole thing. Don't get bogged down in square pegs in round holes. Sit. See what happens when you're alone by yourself. In everyday life, there's no such thing as an "aid" other than your own mind. There's no aid. If we were in that business, then we could sell a lot of sake tonight, the last three nights, thousands of dollars worth of sake.

Q: But the clarification that takes place through meditation, can, cannot that clarification be destroyed or altered through the use of drugs or –

VR: Ha! Unborn, unobstructed, non-dwelling, ha ha - unborn, unobstructed. Unobstructed means that it's not affected by change, cause and effect. Unborn - do I have to go through the whole thing?

Q: No.

VR: Yeah. So basically bla-bla-blah. That's what you're saying. Not a personal thing, just you (snap) realize your own mind at this point. Take a look. That's what we do, everybody, everybody here. As soon as we're confronted with sudden glimpse which is our own question, your question, everybody's question, we say, "Well, isn't it so then, that if I add a little vaseline or if I put a little sauce on top, it's going to be better, worse, what have you." Logic doesn't carry. By yourself alone, what are you? Who are you? What is this world? What is your mind? What is the question and how did it come up? You saw it down and find nothing. What we're talking about is how to relate that to everyday life. Drugs? Sure. Take your drugs: aspirin, cocaine, sleeping pills, antibiotics, roast beef, filet mignon, sweetbreads, everything, the whole phenomenal world is your memory, all of it. You have to have real conviction for the truth, you know. I mean, it's gutsy.

Q: But there's a perspectival shift in everyday life.

VR: A what kind of a shift? What kind?

Q: Perspectival, you know from a perspective. There's, I haven't read the book, but I've heard people talking about that.

VR: Which book?

Q: There's a landscape. I'm not sure exactly what the term is.

VR: The landscape –

Q: Perspective or some, -at a further stage. Yes.

VR: Yeah.

Q: And cert –

VR: I'm losing it.

Q: You're looking at me?

VR: I'm losing it. Get down to it. Ask me a question. You know. I'm not here as King Kong. Just ask me something simple, because I'm getting stupid.

Q: Uh.

VR: Practice meditation. By practicing meditation continually - just, just listen to me for a minute -continually, hard and strong, you gain some conviction that you can experience some moment of unconditioned mind. Then, as you go about your life, flash happens and you think to yourself or you double-think, to yourself, "just like meditation," and then you drop it. The more that happens, the more you realize that two things, technique and mind, are the same. Second

thing, meditation and everyday life are the same. That's what we're in here for. We're not in here for to create arhats and glorified statues that can be looked at as something beautiful to see, who can sit tremendously for three days in perfect posture and glow. Who cares? Seriously, I'm serious. You know. We're, you know, talking about tying shoes, which has become hard for a lot of people here.

Q: But if you're drunk, can you tie shoes?

VR: Drunk? You could be, let's say you just ate a whole roast beef. Can you bend over to tie your shoe? You just drank three pitchers of sake. Can you speak the truth? Can you speak coherently? Can you talk to somebody, anybody? You just had an ounce of cocaine. You just read War and Peace in two hours. The point is very simply something ordinary, something ordinary has to occur in our life. When that sudden glimpse of unconditional mind no longer becomes abstract, but it becomes what we are. Therefore, energy, intelligence is not dependent. Do you remember "not obstructed", not dependent on their parents? Therefore, alcohol is not a parent, a parental thingee, a dependency. You see? Your mind, mind as such, is not dependent on factors, on cause and effect, simple as that. I think that's your question.

Q: Well.

VR: I finally got around to it.

Q: At a high level or at, when you're further, far along the path that might be the case. But in the beginning your mind's going back and forth.

VR: In the beginning, you should sit. In the beginning, the point is just to sit a lot. I mean really sit a lot. Don't you have that itch to find out? Well, then there's a double trick on you, on everybody else here, too. 'Cause you think you can find out here, same way you thought you could find out everywhere else. But the double trick is you can find (laughter) only you won't know it. The whole environment will know it at once. So don't get loaded and bla-bla-blah before you sit. It comes down to that. There's no point, no point. Michael? Ha ha ha ha...

Q: If you give in and admit that you're continuously aware, there seems to be some kind of, well for me at least, some kind of problem of being a body in space.

VR: Right.

Q: And I, it seems fragile.

VR: Um-huh. Absolutely. Right on. That's starting to get into First Noble Truth. When you begin to see that you're actually aware all the time, you begin to see impermanence. Then what happens?

Q: I don't know. I'm crawling at this point.

VR: Yeah. We begin to be frightened.

Q: Yeah.

VR: Yeah. I could die any minute.

Q: I guess.

VR: Shhh! No, no. Go ahead. He was just changing the tape.

Q: Oh. (laughter) I prob...I guess the question I want to ask is, it seems that once you sort of discover your body in space, there seems to be, well, some kind of dance as Rinpoche says, a dance, but it seems like we're constantly in a position because of the fragile situation of being a body in space that you might not be able to fulfill that dance.

VR: Um-huh.

Q: It just appears to me that way. Like I'm thinking of –

VR: That's true. Thinking of –

Q: I was thinking of Suzuki Roshi, that he got cancer and –

VR: Oh, he fulfilled his dance.

Q: Yeah, I know. But I'm saying I don't understand how he did.

VR: Well, he did it by not obstructing. He has the same mind: unobstructed, unborn, unoriginated. So cancer was a part of enlightened mind.

Q: It's real tough.

VR: I mean it sounds a little weird.

Q: Yeah.

VR: Yeah. But it's true; same way as brushing one's teeth, same way as breaking one's heart, same way as one's children dying, same way as one's guru dying, same way as one's concept of oneself dying.

Q: It seems pretty tough.

VR: It is very tough. But what you said is the best part and good for everybody here. Is once you get some glimpse, you realize that this body is fragile and not likely to last long. So, in that case we should learn the teachings which liberate, which actually free the samsaric knot of confusion. And that's why I've decided to make this a two-part ITS and continue at Karne Choling with further teachings of going on with that exact question, which is to give it away. Anyway, my

jumping off point, my starting-off point at Karne Choling and teaching further: body and earth. That's the next thing that one comes across, very vividly.

Q: Thank you.

VR: Ta-ta.

Q: Could you expand a bit on the relationship between memory and thinking and both of them and technique?

VR: Thinking is divided into several categories, which probably we will go greater into detail later on. But there's discursive thought, pictorial thought, and actually, according to the teachings, there are fifty-two kinds of, I think, it's negative thoughts and forty-eight kinds of, I'm sorry, is that right? - fifty-two negative and forty-eight positive types of thinking? Abhidharma? Anyway, anyway, this type of thinking by the early buddhist practitioners has been categorized and written down into ways of thinking, types of thinking. Yeah. So what is the question?

Q: What's the relationship, first of all, between thinking and memory? Pardon me, what's the relation between thinking and memory?

VR: Well, thinking, strictly speaking, is the appearance of mind, awakened mind, in everyday life. Memory is the kind of echo of awakened mind, in everyday life. From the neurosis point of view, thinking is the claustrophobia of being alive and memory is that kind of double pain of not only thinking but remembering that you thought.

Q: If thinking is awakened mind in everyday life, why do we then stop doing it, for instance, in meditation?

VR: Do you?

Q: No, we don't stop; but we go back to the breath. It's, it's - we go back and forth.

VR: Yeah. Well, that's simply to recognize thinking as it is, rather than as you think it is.

Q: All right. And the thing that I was trying to get to was the relationship you spoke about using memory as part of the technique.

VR: That's right.

Q: And I didn't understand the connection you made there.

VR: Well, memory is rethinking. Okay? We can't handle thinking, so we use rethinking. In other words, a breath should go out, uh-huh.

Q: You spoke about the memory of a sudden glimpse. In other words, we would have a memory of a sudden glimpse and that in our technique we used that and it was unclear how we use the memory of a sudden glimpse in our technique, in other words, in our sitting practice.

VR: In sitting practice, as you're sitting, going along, right? Out with the breath, then there's space. You can't feel any sense of yourself really. You just feel the breath going out, going into space, breath going out, going into space, "apple, apple strudel, grandmother made it on Thanksgiving, oh and my cousin Joe was there," and it goes on like that, and suddenly you remember "thinking".

Q: But what I've actually been doing is calling –

VR: That's sudden glimpse, you see.

Q: Sudden glimpse is remembering I'm thinking?

VR: Before you remembered you were thinking you had sudden glimpse that you weren't doing the technique. Yeah. You got it? How do you suppose that word thinking came up? It came from pure intelligence.

Q: Thank you.

VR: Unobstructed, unoriginated.

Q: Yesterday you said something to the effect that pain gives rise to paranoia and that paranoia isn't some way of our route to awakened mind or is useful to us on the path. Paranoia seems to be a fairly normal state of mind, this time and this place. I was wonder if you could just expand on the paranoia.

VR: Exactly. I think that you have the key right there. In our time, in our culture, paranoia is the general tone of our life. It's the roast beef of our life. Everybody, especially in this great city of ours, is looking around their shoulder, always for the wrong reason. In terms of real paranoia, it's looking to see if there really is such thing as a solid self anywhere. Emotion arises, thought arises, bodily sensation arises. Is there any basis for that feeling? It feels like it continues. I feel somehow annoyed by it. I feel like it doesn't belong to me at all. It belongs to the body, not the mind. I feel like I'm stuck in it. I feel like I'm beyond it. See, paranoia, there, is short-circuiting that process. So as something begins to arise, you immediately look for the origin. Maybe it's a little too late, but still, it helps, it's workable. That's what technique is all about. The same thing is saying, "go back to the breath." We're looking for the origin of a thought process and the only way for people who don't have the ability to tie their shoes is to use such a profound and simple technique as going back to the breath. It's so insulting, absolutely, terribly insulting to all us intelligent people. But we have to start that way. There's no other way. Get out the volumes, huge volumes. Gestalt! Whatever that means, I have no idea – Christianity, Buddhism, Ismism, paranoia means you don't know. Healthy paranoia means practice. Because you don't know doesn't mean you have to run and hide, put your tail between your legs. It means that you look. Unbiased, unborn, unoriginated. Straight back. To the left. Left. Left.

Q: Is there something especially unawake about the state of mind when you're actually asleep?

VR: Is there something especially unawake with the state of mind when you're actually asleep. Now what do you mean by asleep?

Q: You know, when you go to bed, the usual.

VR: (inaudible) No. Not necessarily.

Q: Then why do we use the expression awake to describe the state of mind that we're trying to talk about here?

VR: Well, we use the term awake to mean that sleep, which is normally contrasted to awake, is happening all the time, and that if you're awake, you can be awake in your dreams as well, quite so. I'm sure that you've had that experience as well.

Q: I've never gone back to my breath in my dreams.

VR: What did you go back to then? Your memory. (Inaudible) memory. Yeah. Well, what I'm trying to say today is memory and trying to go back to the breath are the same thing. Just using the breath is because when we're consciously awake, we're too clever. When we're asleep actually we have a better chance at it. Well, I don't want to get too carried away because we'll be doing a Don Juan trip here. Awake and asleep are two words. That's all. States of consciousness, I think, needs a lot more study. Like sleeping consciousness, awaking consciousness, needs a lot more study than we've had time to do here. But we do it.

Q: Could you say something more about conviction? I'm not quite sure I know what that means.

VR: Well, conviction means that there's at once some sense of warmth and non-enemy. It happens in yourself - non-enemy.

Q: So it's more of an intuitive thing rather than a clumsy kind of trying or effort.

VR: I think so. To begin with, it's always intuitive thing. But we try to emphasize that the two here have to come together. Effort is basically trying to understand what that intuitive experience actually is. And trying to understand is simply relating to those who have passed along before you on the path. And they say, maybe they say, "unborn," and suddenly you click. You say, "Right." And then people, I suppose in our world, our society - which is slightly unfortunate for us and at the same time it helps us - will say like basically, "That's purely random. There's no proof, absolutely no proof." Conviction doesn't need any proof. At the same time, we have to be careful because it might become fanaticism.

Q: How is it different than confidence?

VR: Conviction and confidence? Conviction is the kind of buying a ticket, as Gampopa says, and confidence is riding on the train. They're basically the same thing, but conviction is just the decision to continue and confidence is having continued, realizing that you don't have to look back as you're going, actually going.

Q: Could you explain more what the traditional thinking is about thinking stopping with the end of the out-breath?

VR: Yeah, that's a –

Q: Could you talk a little more about that?

VR: - difference between actually our practice, which is based on the Tibetan tradition, and the hinayana practice. In hinayana practice, that out-breath comes back in again. You follow it both ways. In Tibetan practice, it comes back out, it goes out and dissolves and then there's a gap. In hinayana practice, they say, "What do you mean gap? There's nothing to meditate on." That's exactly the point. The gap of nothing to meditate on is a primitive experience of sunyata, egolessness.

Q: So that shamata is designed just to cultivate that gap?

VR: Absolutely.

Q: Very specialized –

VR: - from the Tibetan point of view. "Mixing mind with space" it's called.

Q: Do the five skandhas and twelve nidanas ever stop in you or, I mean, in an enlightened mind?

VR: They never stop in you.

Q: (laughter) Okay. This is the way I understand it. I want to see if I really, you know, have this at all. Going back to what you said the first night about "no answer", okay? As a personal experience I'm seeing that having no answer, if you look at that as not interfering with your ability to enjoy pleasure, help others, be intelligent and think intelligently, even though there's –

VR: Experience pain.

Q: - all of these things. And you then, in looking at "no answer" being irrelevant to all those things of being human and even, you know, experiencing the worth of human life, you know, then it seems that what enlightened state is, is remembering constantly that that's what "no answer" means. That it's irrelevant to experiencing all of these, I would call them, "powers" in human life. And I find it very powerful and very positive thing and I'd like to see –

VR: That's true –

Q: Okay.

VR: - up to the point where the remembering is not necessary.

Q: I don't understand. What do you mean?

VR: Remembering is the first stage.

Q: Oh, you mean, beyond remembering it becomes automatic in a sense.

VR: From whose point of view?

Q: But that remembering is the first stage. Remembering "no answer."

VR: Yes. Right. That's the first stage.

Q: Being a human being, that has all those –

VR: Whew! We got that far. That's good. I mean, in this world that's extremely good, because a mass, a sea of suffering doesn't even give a thought at all to what we're saying.

Q: I don't understand what you mean. I didn't hear. You said "a mass of suffering –

VR: A mass of humanity, they're suffering, never gave a thought to what we're saying.

Q: Yeah. Why is there a need to go beyond that remembering except that the remembering becomes constant? It becomes automatic almost.

VR: Because when you're remembering, there's still somebody remembering; when there's somebody remembering, there's still somebody watching; when there's still somebody watching, then there's somebody cheating. (laughter)

Q: I gottcha, got it. Yeah. Okay.

Q: When one speaks about remembering, for example in everyday life, and then there is the sudden glimpse, oftentimes I have the desire, when I have the sudden glimpse, to sort of start just practicing a little mindfulness on my breathing say, if I'm walking down the street or whatever. And I feel a bit uneasy about it because I'm not sure if that's legitimate. Should one just keep that to the practice itself?

VR: Right. If you have some sort of a flash just walking down the street or eating a hamburger: flash, remember drop it.

Q: Thank you.

Q: Why does that particular "flash" happen in the absence of pain?

VR: In the absence of - ?

Q: Pain.

VR: Well, it's happening, in the absence of reference point. But pain happens to be the only tickle for the shirtee. It's the simplest thing for the thickheads to relate to. Simplest thing: pain. This is what we are faced with everyday. Touch it, scratch it, walk on it. It smells. It's claustrophobic. It's hard to do. Another day, I gotta wake up again. I gotta wake up again, another day. And there's nothing I can do about it, except kill myself. But I'm not sure that's gonna work. If I kill myself, will it stop? Will it really stop?

Q: It's funny listening to these questions, because it seems like nobody can believe the fact like pain is basic to awakened state of mind. Nobody can believe that.

VR: You think so?

Q: Yeah.

VR: Want to take a vote?

Q: What? (laughter)

VR: Want to take a vote? You're going to lose. They'll all say yes. (laughter) You see the point is that's what is, what we're talking about all along, of why meditation practice and this whole teaching is necessary, because we do have that intelligence to understand, always. It's not that nobody can believe. It's just that habitual, habitual, habitual thinking prevents us from conviction to the truth. That's why if somebody said, "off with his head." Right. Not "off with his head!" Right. Democracy (unintelligible). Anything that's easy.

Q: Sometimes I think I'm on that train, the confidence train. You know that one? And so much so that it's going at top speed and there's not even any awareness of the train or myself on it, just a direction. And once in a while that will happen. But I don't understand why it crumbles.

VR: That's because you forgot the train and the fact that you're on it. It's very important. Think about it. Awareness doesn't, awareness of non-self doesn't exclude the details. It excludes the preoccupation with details.

VR: One more great one, that sums the whole thing up. (laughs) Okay. I'm ready.

Q: Could you say what the relationship is, if any, between holding back and wanting more?

VR: Well, that relationship between holding back and wanting more is what's called buddha nature.

Q: That sums it up?

VR: A little bit more. Ambition on the path - that's what we're talking about, I think - ambition on the path, wanting to get, possess, enlightened mind, wanting to have it. At the same time, knowing that wanting to have it is destructive because it's already there. That's what we've heard. There's no way to start but to be a fool, to be embarrassed. To be embarrassed means wanting to get it, at the same time, holding back because you realize people will see you wanting to get it. You'll see yourself wanting to get it. The only way is straight ahead with pleasure and pain at the same time. There's no other way. There is no apology here. Buddhadharma has no apology. It doesn't giggle at your stupidity and it doesn't applaud at your cleverness. Wanting to get it is basic inspiration to awaken your own Buddha-quality. Wanting to hold back is your basic inspiration of non-ego - your real Buddha-quality. No way friends, my dear friends, no way can you give up one or the other. In order to proceed on this path, which is called the lion's roar, which is the greatest, most true, you must bring everything with you: your embarrassment and your heroics, your hundred dollar contribution and your hundred dollar debt. Either way, the lineage accepts you completely. If that's what you want to do. Ambition is intelligence. Ambition, at the same time, is a deterrent. Sort it out for yourself through the practice.

Thank you very much.