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VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN

The Mahamudra Lineage

Talk Three of Three

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VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN: So tonight we should conclude our weekend with some discussion of the fruition of this particular path, that is to say, what is meant by the attainment of mahamudra, or the complete realization of the indivisibility of mind and guru and phenomena. Because in reality what we are talking about is nothing special, and at the same time, it is complete in the beginning and complete in the middle and complete in the end. And it is always good to consider what the path is from the point of view of the introduction or the ground, and it is also good to have some notion of the fruition or the end of the path. Now, according to the tantra teachings, reality is said to be the three bodies of the Buddha. And those three bodies are the dharmakaya, the sambhoghakaya, and the nirmanakaya. And those three bodies are said to be indivisible in what is called svabhavikakaya.

So, how does that relate to our experience of sitting practice of meditation, and how does that relate to working in the world and working with this particular existence? Understanding dharmakaya means to understand the ultimately pure, unconstructed truth. In fact, all of our practice is aimed at understanding this dharmakaya.

Dharmakaya is said to be the formless reality, whereas the sambhoghakaya and the nirmanakaya are said to be reality with form. But the dharmakaya is said to be the most precious, quintessential reality. So, in essence, all of our practice and all of our intention and our realization is dharmakaya. Now, what we have said about this dharmakaya in the very beginning of our weekend was that the ground is unobstructed, unborn, and unceasing, without any concept and completely pure from the beginning. That

means no karmic stain whatsoever. Now, how that becomes actualized is through practice, and when we practice we realize that this unobstructed purity manifests as luminous cognition, which we call the sambhogakaya. *Sambhogha* means enjoyment; *kaya* means body. *Kaya* means body; in this case *dharmakaya* means body of dharma. *Sambhoghakaya* means body of enjoyment. *Nirmanakaya* means body-body, so to speak—body of manifestation. So in every experience these three things are happening. There's the absolute purity; there's the luminous quality of that; and there's the manifestation—all the time. This is our continuous state of mind, and all three together form a complete unity which is called the mahamudra. And that we call svabhavikakaya.

So these terms, although they are Sanskrit and seemingly foreign, they actually point to the reality. So, you should remember them in case you'll read them sometime, or in case they pop up in your meditation practice—which might happen, I mean they might.

So you could say from the pure unobstructed sky of awareness, consciousness dawns as light, or sunrise, or arising, which illuminates all of the sky, and from that many stars and constellations appear. In terms of our experience, the very first moment that you open your eyes in the morning, the three bodies of reality come into effect. That is to say, the moment you wake up from sleep, the moment you wake up from dream, the trikaya becomes manifest—first, as nothing whatsoever, then as luminosity or light, and finally as form or manifestation. This is the unceasing process of the awakened mind, and it is called the trikaya. This teaching of trikaya is the very heart of all vajrayana teaching. If you know it, then there's nothing else to study and nothing else to learn. If you don't know it, well, then you have to pile book upon book upon book, just to find out. But in our lineage, we go right to the heart of the matter, which means to say that these so-called states of being are recognizable now. Later on, you can develop the finesse in meditation and the subtlety of understanding how the transformation occurs from one particular state of being to another without their being any break in the continuity. And I think that's really what's called the enlightened state: the suppleness and subtlety of mind to see how this continuity which we call awareness, which is pure and simple, evolves into all the forms and manifestations which we call our perceptions, without there being any break whatsoever, without there being any duality whatsoever, without there being any ego whatsoever. And that is the awakened state, which we call mahamudra.

Now, in reality there is not much to be done or said. Having heard this, you should practice in this way. In the beginning, don't let anything come. In

the middle, don't let anything stay. In the end, don't let anything go. In fact, don't do anything. That's the main point. When you understand the unfolding of the three kayas, then your mind is complete and you have no more questions. You no longer say to yourself, "What is real, what isn't real?" You no longer say to yourself, "What should I accept, what should I reject?" You no longer say to yourself, "What should I do now, and what should I do later?" You don't do that. Because there is complete unfolding continually, and the very progression of life, so to speak —our life, being born, aging, getting sick and dying— is the unfolding of these three kayas, and in that way we no longer are afraid when we see things as they are.

The dharmakaya, being like space, has never had a thought. The sambhoghakaya, being like energy, has never had an intention. The nirmanakaya, being like solid rock, has never had a doubt. So these three are dissolvable in each other. They dissolve into each other. And that's what's called indivisibility, or continuity. In this particular teaching, it says that when you see the three kayas, then the mother and son luminosity dissolve together. The mother and son luminosity —that awareness which is born from your first awakening onto the path, and the fruition when you understand the whole journey and what you are doing, then rock meets bone and then the mother and son luminosities dissolve together. And, as is said in our lineage, this is an experience told by a mute.

This causes, as they say in the tantras, this causes the sun and the moon to shine simultaneously. The sun is skillful means, and the moon is wisdom. That means, in your very lifetime, in your body, in this lifetime, you are able to bring sentient beings to fruition. That is to say, beings like ourselves attain that perfect state of enlightenment which is the mahamudra. And you as a buddha show the way by your natural manifestation. Naturally, you exude or radiate compassion because you have nothing to gain and nothing to lose. Naturally, your body is solid like a mountain and empty like space, because you have seen the dharmakaya. And naturally, your activity is like a swollen river. It overflows its banks because it has no choice. This buddha activity, which is the result of practice, happened to all the lineage figures and holders of this lineage, and it is the crisp jewel of enlightenment of the Kagyüs. And they never tire of telling people about it, either. Because of their great compassion, they say, "You must see this, because this is something you have never seen, and when you see it you will be satisfied. You will be satisfied. And until you see it, you will not." You may think you have attained some degree of enlightenment, but that is not the mahamudra. The mahamudra is when every doubt is erased and there is no

thought whatsoever, and your manifestation is completely luminous, just like Avalokiteshvara. Or, that's the legacy of the Kagyüs.

There's also another aspect of it, is that your teeth begin to grind, and you begin to eat strange things, and you begin to sing songs and dance. Sometimes you sleep in the middle of a crossroads, and sometimes you live on an island with only dogs. Well, these things happen. There's no telling what the manifestation might be, but in any case, one hallmark of this particular dharma and this particular enlightenment is that its very manifestation —just being alone— benefits people without even trying. Without even saying, “I am going to do good for the others,” it happens. Until you reach that state, you are basically climbing up the mountain. Now that is not to say that your practice of the hinayana-mahayana is no good. It is good. But you should have the goal, mahamudra, in mind, which is total king's view. It's like a vulture circling over the carrion. That's the view of mahamudra. A vulture's very steady, and continues the circles until the carrion is dead, then it comes down and just picks apart the corpse. In the same way, with phenomena we can work quite easily that way. [Laughs.] I suppose that's not very romantic, but, on the other hand, it is. You could feel yourself just lonely, floating in space, looking for something to eat or looking for something to attach yourself to, without any care.

Milarepa, he was like a vulture. He perfected his practice through twelve years of sitting by himself in the mountains in a cave, through all types of weather, through anything, without any food. As you know, he became green from eating nettles. But he was like a vulture, in that he did not stop circling until the carrion —the ego— was dead. Then he jumped down and ate the remains, which is called *mahasukha*, great bliss. When you begin to eat the remains of ego, that's great bliss. I hope I'm not giving anything away. [Laughter.]

Freedom in the dharmakaya has no sense of itself. Freedom in the sambhoghakaya has no sense of effort. Freedom in the nirmanakaya works without working. Those are three types of freedom. Until it no longer occurs to you, you should check yourself out constantly. Until it no longer occurs to you, you should always see whether or not there is such a thing as enlightenment. And when it no longer occurs to you, you're either enlightened or you're dreaming. And if you're dreaming, you will wake up and you'll do it again anyway. But in any case, by degree, by aperture, so to speak, you will see what there is to see. And when there's nothing left to see, then that's it. No more questions. [Laughs.]

Well, you should take it to heart. It's easy to do, hard to accomplish. So I don't think there's anything much more I could say about fruition. I mean, that seems to be it. So now, since this is our last time to talk to each other for awhile, I would encourage you to say, or to ask if you have any questions about the practice, especially about the practice, or about the attitude to practice, or attitude to post-meditation. Whatever it is, please talk about it now, because this our chance. And I'm not saying we won't meet again, but for this time, the auspiciousness of this occasion, we should take advantage of it.

QUESTION: Sir, is there passion involved while one would be circling?

VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN: Yes, there is passion involved, but that passion is what's called egoless passion. It's very keen and very steady, and is looking at the prey from a distance —not really too concerned, at the same time knowing where the food is. [Laughs.]

Q: Thank you. [Laughter.]

Question: Sir, you said the other day that you see that quality of mahamudra first in the guru and then in your own mind and I think then in phenomena.

VR: That's right.

Q: In respect to seeing that quality in the guru, in what way should one emulate the guru?

VR: I think one has to emulate the guru in terms of practice. In all of our lineage, that is what the students do. Because the guru's practice is so strong, the students want to emulate that. That's really where the quality of emulating comes in.

Q: Thank you.

Question: Sir, in your Shambhala address, you mentioned that this could be possibly a year of passion but with discipline.

VR: Yes.

Q: I was wondering if you could comment on that in relation to what you said yesterday about indulgence being a process of making the worst of the best situation. [Laughter.]

VR: Well, that's precisely what I meant, that if you have passion, that's kind of like the worst situation for humans, because it's constant desire to fulfill themselves with something or other, and if it's not this, it's something else. If it's not this, it's something else, and nothing works —ever. However, if you have discipline, and you bring the two together —passion and discipline— that's making the worst out of the best. Is that what I said? Or the best out of the worst? Well, at that point, it doesn't matter. If you bring the two together, that's where everything sort of clicks. Because, you know, in terms of the passion, that's your buddha nature. That's your notion to attain enlightenment altogether, is that passion. Without the discipline, it just becomes —it scatters like, well, just like raindrops on a roof. It just goes all over. And every little drop becomes another thought- form, and another play at existence, which is just a play. But if you put a pot there, it catches the water. And the pot in this case is meditation.

Q: Thank you.

Question: Sir, speaking of discipline, I'm wondering how discipline relates to effort and effortlessness, as you talked about yesterday. Just what is the relationship between discipline and effort?

VR: Well, discipline in the complete sense of the word is the simplicity of egolessness. That's discipline. The fact that there is no ego makes everything simple. Therefore, there's no effort involved. In terms of effort, that is the discipline of devotion. Actually, devotion you have to crank up. It's not what you think. It's not like you say, “Ah...I'm just devoted to you.” But when you get in contact with a real teacher, they will pull your hair out in a way that you're not used to —maybe one by one. [Laughter.] And you have to stay awake, but you want to go to sleep, because it hurts, every little thing hurts, you know? So the guru is sitting there pulling, pulling your hair out one by one. You have to stay awake. That's devotion. Devotion is to stay awake to the process, even though you would like to go to sleep. Discipline is realizing that effortlessness is non-ego. Well, don't try and understand it, you just do it.

Q: Thank you.

Q: Sir, would you mind my asking another question about psychology?  
[Pause.] I would like to ask another question about psychology.

VROT: I hear you. [Laughter. I don't know from where, but I hear you. Go ahead. Maybe my inner, alter, something or other hears you.

Q: Well, the outer is asking a more general question, which is, what about any intellectual pursuit at all? If I—

VR: Devilish thing.

Q: If I'm asking about right livelihood, for example—

VR: Right livelihood is easy to ask about. Go ahead.

Q: It was clear to me from the beginning that the dharma was superior to psychotherapy. There is no question about that. The question arises—

VR: That's funny in itself, yes. You're going to have to climb this mountain with me. Whatever it is you want to say, just say it.

Q: I'm trying.

VR: I'm impeding you every step of the way. [Laughter.] Go ahead, go ahead.

Q: No, the question is, how can you make a decent living, because you have to use your mind? You used the metaphor yesterday, about how come I understand what you're saying. It relies on conceptual mind in some way.

VR: No, it doesn't. What I meant by saying how is it that you understand immediately what I'm saying, is that there is no concept in between. That's why there's understanding.

Q: How could you ever make a decent living out of selling your thoughts?

VR: What do you mean by a decent living?

Q: A decent living —I'm invoking the metaphor that you used the other day about you're selling psychotherapy, you're selling something to other people and collecting money for it. I'm in the business of selling my thoughts, in a way.

VR: That reminds me of going to an arcade way. You put the money in, and there's a lady inside with a sort of gypsy hat on, and you put the money in and it comes out and it says, "Step back, please," you know. [Laughter.]

Q: That's exactly true, so the question is, "Should I become a carpenter instead?"

VR: If it makes it easier not to analyze, yes. Do the simplest thing. It has — you know, basically our livelihood situation— if you talk about right livelihood, what you're talking about is ego. Most of the time, people are talking about livelihood in terms of what makes them feel comfortable, what makes them feel important, and what makes them feel that their life is going to continue. That's what they call livelihood. According to the Buddha, right livelihood is that which naturally generates itself from a non-aggressive state of mind.

Q: So the question of psychology really isn't important any more at that point.

VR: I don't think any question is all-important, really. What I'm doing is talking about the dharma.

Q: Thank you.

Question: Sir, my question —my question is around my practice for the past couple of days. You talked about how the practice here and what goes on in the phenomenal world is one and the same. So, what I've been trying to do is see how that works.

VR: Oh, how did you try to do that. [Laughs; laughter.] How did you actually try and do that? Because this is a good point, actually a good point.

Q: During my sitting practice in the morning, the noise that was going on outside was quite evident. Then I realized it was also the noise going on inside here, which was the same. There was no difference. Is this what you're talking about?

VR: Si, si. That's part of what I'm talking about.

Q: Okay—

VR: That's the first glimpse you get.

Q: I attempted to do it a step further.

VR: Go ahead.

Q: This evening, instead of going to dinner, I decided to go walking.

VR: Um-hm. [Pause.] Around here?

Q: Around here.

VR: Not bad. [Laughter.] Not bad. Okay, all right, so, what occurred then?

Q: Nothing, and then everything.

VR: Um-hm.

Q: It was the idea or the concept that you spoke about the practice. And when I walked, everything was going on outside—I mean everything.

VR: Um-hm.

Q: There was a man that had a cat on a leash.

VR: Um-hm. [Laughter.]

Q: You know? [Laughter.] This is not funny.

VR: It's telling the truth, right? Yeah.

Q: Yeah. There were dopers being put in jail.

VR: Um-hm.

Q: And then what was going on for me was just walking.

VR: Um-hm.

Q: You know, and rather than feel threatened or anything, it was so spacious. It just was real spacious, and I didn't feel threatened, I didn't feel anything, I just walked. And I'm not familiar with San Francisco, you know. But then again, I am, because I live in Berkeley and there's no difference. [VROT laughs; laughter.] Is this what—part of what you're talking about?

VR: Oh, yes. This is very much part of what I'm talking about. This is like, you might say this is the kernel of it. You know, like if you take away the shell and the husk, you get right down to seeing a man walking—

Q: Cat, it's a cat.

VR: Or his hat, for that matter, you know? And you're walking in it, not from the point of view of this is friend or enemy particularly. This is the display. And it's not really from the point of view of the display of my mind.

Q: Okay.

VR: This is it. This is it. It's not like you're creating this show. That's a little too, what should I say—

Q: Theatrical?

VR: Yeah. It's kind of like trying to be important.

Q: Yeah. Can I ask another question?

VR: Sure, go ahead.

Q: So then, if practice —as practice being what it is, is in everything, it's in you and I, what we're doing right now.

VR: Sure, that's what I'm talking about tonight, continuity.

Q: It frightens me.

VR: You're telling me. Absolutely. Should do. Should make you feel really scared on a fundamental level. When the heart starts to beat —boom, b-boom, b-boom, b-boom— that kind of thing, then that's it. Get into that. Dissolve into that. That's the mother and son happening at once. Don't be afraid of that. But anyway, do it through practice. Don't do it through your mind, you see?

Q: Thank you.

VR: Yeah, don't do it through your mind. It'll be made up and it won't come to anything. But I'm saying this, in order to point to something, you see? Like I said earlier, Tilopa said, “I have nothing at which to point, except know that this pointing is to itself, from itself.” So, that's the same thing. So, just continue exactly the way you are doing. And let it come to you, rather than you look for it. That's the deal.

Q: Is that the blue, blue, blue, blue, blue that you—

VR: That's the blue, blue, blue, blue, blue. [Laughter.] That's exactly it.

Q: Thank you.

VR: Great, great. Thank you. The gentleman here? [Laughs.]

Question: Sir, I have a question about how to deal with, on one hand seeing the urgency of practice, maybe just at a mental level, and, on the other hand, respecting your process or, I guess, patience, maybe.

VR: I have found that in my own practice, and in people I've met, that somehow the mind and the phenomena open at the same rate. Or the same aperture happens, you know. The more you practice, the more you feel like you

want to renounce the world. There's no doubt about it. No matter what you say, the more you practice, you feel like the things of the world are not important any more. The more you practice with that, the more you see that the things of the world are the means of developing bodhichitta, or awakened state of mind. And the more you practice that, the more you see that everything that occurs is the moment of awakening, therefore has all the qualities of the buddhas and the bodhisattvas all the time. So it seems to me that the urgency to practice or to shed the sort of like umbilical cord, to shed it, is in proportion to the actual awakening that one has. So, I would say just go along with whatever the intensity is —go along with it. You will find very soon if you're making it up. Very soon you will find if you are making it up. You'll say, "Well, I just want to practice. That's what I want to do. I want to practice and I want to just get rid of this world." But you can't. It comes back just like an old sneaker in front of an elevator. [Laughter.]

Q: Thank you.

VR: It happens, and you think to yourself, "Did I do that?" But the thing is to be relaxed and have some sort of effortlessness in everything, so that when the opportunity arises to practice more, you take it. You're not confused as to the timing of things, as to the appropriateness of things. When you get really soaked in the dharma, then you don't have to worry about accepting and rejecting the good possibilities and the bad ones. Everything becomes the same.

Question: Sir, I'd like you to ask you a question about —you spoke about mind dissolving into space, or mixing mind with space, and that this is an effortless process, and it seems like sometimes in my practice I experience that, and sometimes I experience just sitting there kind of dully, and no effort, and it's—but nothing's really happening, and there's—yeah, there's a—[laughter]. What differentiates those two things?

VR: Nothing. [Laughter.]

Q: Why do I think they're different?

VR: I don't know. Why do you?

Q: The first one seems to have a brightness.

VR: And the second one seems to have a dullness.

Q: Doesn't seem to have a much of anything.

VR: That means dullness.

Q: Okay. [Pause.]

VR: Yes.

Q: Is that dullness still meditation?

VR: I think so. Only in the vajrayana would we say such a thing. The other people would say, "No, it's not." We would say, yes it is. If there is—if there are two minds, I would like to know, first of all, which is the first one and which is the second one? If there is awareness of dullness and awareness of light, which is the real awareness—the awareness of light or the awareness of dullness?

Q: It doesn't feel like there's awareness of the dullness.

VR: To whom?

Q: To whoever it was that was aware of the light.

VR: Let's see. [Laughter.] Now, this is San Francisco; it must be.... It is without a doubt continuous awareness, that is without a doubt. The point of view of ego is to make distinctions. But it's very hard, when you say, "Well, it is continuous," hard to grasp because it is ungraspable by the mind. There is no thought that can encompass this awareness. There is no particular image, nor is there memory that can encompass this awareness. This awareness is pure and simple, and continuous, and it manifests as dullness when it is shaded. And it manifests as light when it is not.

Q: Shaded by what?

VR: Shaded by itself.

Q: So what I'm talking about is simply preference?

VR: I think in a personal way, yeah. One would like to have the good experiences rather than the bad ones. But that's just all temporary stuff. That is not mahamudra. [Laughs.]

Q: Thank you.

Question: Sir, I would like to know how and why this thangka of Vajradhara is an expression of the simplicity of our mind. [Laughter.]

VR: It looks like you to me. [Laughter.]

Q: You're a big help. [Laughter.]

VR: I try and I try and I try. [Laughter.] You're just going to have to practice, my friend. You can't keep asking questions forever. It doesn't work. [Laughs; laughter.] There you are. [VR points to thangka.] Take a look at yourself. [Laughter.] Looks pretty good to me. See, nobody wants to really do it. It is best if we just try to understand it. [Laughs; laughter.] You can't do it with your mind. You actually have to do it, you know, almost, we're talking about manual labor here. We're changing space, figuratively maybe, not really.

Q: Sir, I was curious about, you said that the three kayas arise when we awake in the morning?

VR: [End Side A, begin Side B; some words lost when tape turned] ...in blankness, there's no movement. And therefore, there's no image. In dream, there's image without a body, so there's images as if floating in space. When you wake up, the very moment you open your eyes, everything comes together at once. That's dharmakaya. As soon as everything comes together at once, there's a thought; that's sambhogakaya. As soon as there's a thought, there's a movement; that's nirmanakaya. Just we don't see it that way.

Q: And in the sleeping state, those are not together at that point?

VR: Well, it depends on who you are.

Q: Could you tell us what it's like for a great teacher?

VR: No. I'm not a great teacher, so I don't know.

Q: Could you tell us what it's like for an ordinary person? Are they separated?

VR: Well, you could tell me, then.

Q: Do you want me to say what I think?

VR: Well, from one ordinary person to another, it would be okay with me.  
[Laughter.]

Q: I don't have much to say. I could. Well, it seems like there's not—it's just being lost, like believing that that's completely real.

VR: I wouldn't get too intellectual about these things.

Q: Uh-huh, okay, thanks.

VR: So what have we learned?

Question: Sir, I have a problem with doubt. It just seems a lot of the time the way I relate to the dharma seems really fuzzy—a lot of the time, just because that's how I usually relate to things: I doubt. Despite the fact that I've moved awhile, you know, the time I've practiced, I've come to accept a great many things that I wouldn't have believed possible before. But, still it kind of nags at me, because, well, I guess I feel like I've got different feet in different camps, and I vacillate between one and the other. Is this a problem?

VR: [Laughs.] What's your name?

Q: Bill.

VR: Bill what?

Q: [Inaudible: Barstan?]

VR: Where do you live, Bill?

Q: El Cerrito.

VR: [Laughs.] What do you do—everyday?

Q: Survive.

VR: How?

Q: I'm a secretary.

VR: Eight hours a day, or seven, or five, or three, or—?

Q: Eight hours a day.

VR: What do you do when you're not doing that?

Q: I get involved doing a lot of things, such as I try to meditate, journal write.

VR: How much do you meditate, let's say in a week?

Q: It varies all over the place.

VR: Between what and what?

Q: Good question.

VR: Simple question.

Q: It seems to be seasonal, going from like an hour a day—I mean, very roughly—to—

VR: I'm listening.

Q: Let me put it this way. I'm recovering from a very destructive time of my life that lasted a long time, and it seems like I'm doing a lot of work dealing with emotions, a lot of work dealing with diet, exercise, and I tend to want to do—overdo everything, or else I tend to just close in.

VR: I see. So how much do you meditate in a week?

Q: It can go from two to ten hours.

VR: Depending on the season?

Q: Yeah.

VR: Do you practice by yourself or do you practice in a group?

Q: Mostly alone.

VR: I think you should practice more in a group. It'll take away the doubt factor. When you practice in a group situation, it sort of cuts through the idea of, you know, the heavy-handed quality of having to accomplish something. At first, it's quite embarrassing to practice in a group, because you think somebody's better than you or they're worse than you. But once you get right into it, which takes no more than five minutes, you feel the power of meditating with other people in the same space. It creates a quality of awakening. And I think that's why the Buddha talked about the sangha as being extremely important. And here in San Francisco and in Berkeley and wherever, all around, practice together and the doubt that comes from too many activities will be resolved rather quickly. I think that's the main point. That doubt that you're talking about is due to discursiveness. And discursiveness is only undercut when you sit with your friends, peers, whatever you want to call them—people.

Q: I have a difficult time joining.

VR: I understand. That's why I'm saying this.

Q: Thank you.

VR: That's the way to do it. It's embarrassing. I understand. I never liked to sit with anybody. No, no, not at the beginning. I didn't like it. I even made my own shrine room in my bedroom in a box. I created a box within a box, in order not to be with other people in another box. [Laughter.] Turned out to be the same box. It doesn't really matter. Once you get over the embarrassment, there's no problem. And, like I said, it takes ten minutes—tops. Fifteen, if you're agitated. [Laughter.]

Question: Sir, at various points, during this weekend, you said that everything was mahamudra. Another time you said, that's not mahamudra.

VR: That wasn't everything. [Laughter.]

Q: Is delusion included in mahamudra?

VR: Yes, absolutely.

Q: Is there any way not to practice mahamudra?

VR: No.

Q: Thank you.

VR: Especially if it's been pointed out to you by a genuine teacher. I don't see how you could practice anything else. You could make up some sort of practice for awhile, but it won't work for very long. In terms of mahamudra, both delusion and enlightenment—they are the same. That's very good, David.

Question: Sir—

VR: Saraha says, “Ah, the mind dwells on the thingness of itself.”

Q: Sir, last night you said something to the effect that you might find yourself in pain and that if you straightened up, the pain would go away. Suppose it's the opposite. Suppose you straighten up and the pain gets worse.

VR: Suppose it is.

Q: Well, then the question is, how to work with it from some quality of maitri, I guess.

VR: Well, I think probably that is maitri, that when you get to the point where you straighten up and it still doesn't go away, then you have to be kind to yourself, because you are kind to yourself if you know that you have an out, you see? You're kind to yourself because you think if you achieve your goal then the pain will go away. But when you achieve your goal and it doesn't, then you should be kind. That is when you should practice kindness.

Q: How would that manifest?

VR: Let's see.

Q: Thank you.

Question: Sir, since I have a hard time understanding some of these concepts, which seem somewhat abstract, I'm trying to make a list of practical suggestions for what to do when you meditate. And one of my points, it seems, is that you're saying we should try to sit a lot, that we should sit with others when possible, and that we should relax when we're sitting, and that—is there any other practical—practical point for what—or slogan we could tell ourself before we sit down to meditate or—

VR: No, I think that's it.

Q: Thank you.

VR: Sit a lot. Sit with others. Relax. [Laughter.]

Question: Hello. Can you hear me? Now you can. Okay, I want to say that, for one thing, tonight's kind of a peak experience for me, I guess you could say, if you don't mind the language.

VR: No, not at all. [Laughter.] It's sort—

Q: Psychology, you know.

VR: My cup of—no, it's beyond psychology. It's my kind of—it's kind of like mountaintop, right? Peak?

Q: Right. Most of the training I've done is Shambhala, and I was wondering—hah, hah, trick—how does—perhaps—how does the Shambhala Training, as far as the meditation, differ from the mahamudra? In other words, how is basic goodness different from the mahamudra?

VR: I hope it's the same.

Q: I hope it's the same?

VR: I hope so. I don't see any difference. Sometimes it's necessary to talk to people in different ways. But if there are two realities, I can't imagine what that would be. [Pause.] And then when I turn the corner—no. [Laughter.] There is a man who danced with his wife. [Laughs.]

Question: Sir, my question is—[loud audio hum]

VR: Are we ready to take off?

Q: My question is related to the gentlemen who spoke about pain. Experiencing that myself in sitting, I find that when I come—the three days that I've done this—in the morning as I start, it's—I'm very gung-ho. There's no pain, it's just sitting. As the day starts to progress, the pain becomes quite evident. There's been times when I forgot about the breathing, and just worked with dealing with the pain.

VR: Yes.

Q: There was a moment when the pain was just pain, and there was nothing I could do, so I could just sit with the pain. And what I thought about was all the buddhas that I've seen, or the pictures—are they in pain? Is that what this is—[laughter] or does it get—? He has a smile on his face, you know, and it's like—is it, it's pain that's not pain?

VR: It is an incredible sense of humor.

Q: It has to be. [Laughter.]

VR: It is an incredible sense of humor. I must admit that that's what it is.

Q: Thank you, sir.

VR: You're welcome.

Question: Sir, you've been talking about mahamudra mainly in relation to sitting practice. Many people in this room have also been working in your household in various roles, and I was wondering if you say just a few words about that kind of practice, in relation—

VR: I don't know what they're doing there. [Laughter.] You say it's “my household,” but I don't know any “my.” I think they're there because they're confused. They gather around certain spots, and they carry things from one room to another. And I watch them do that. [Laughter.] I don't know what that is. It's not my household, by the way.

Q: How would you say that that swirl of activity relates to mahamudra?

VR: Well, that is mahamudra.

Q: Okay, thanks. [Laughter.]

VR: I hope that helps. In the path, we say that mind and phenomena are the same. That's called practice. Put your hand up.

Question: In—sir, in the chant to Guru Rinpoche, it says—I think one phrase is that, “May you remove all obstacles without exception.”

VR: Yes, all of them.

Q: And I was thinking, if delusion—if there's no real sense of obstacle in mahamudra practice, then what is the obstacle that we are referring to?

VR: If there would be any that arose, please, great Guru Rinpoche, remove those from my mind.

Q: So that you could be in the place of just appreciating?

VR: Well, I think you have to have a great devotion to say such things. “Oh, Guru Rinpoche, please take this away from this mind, which wants to practice the undiluted, real practice. If anything arises that is not in harmony with this practice, please remove those obstacles, great Guru.” Sounds like theistic, but it's like full moon in a cloudless sky. It's that kind of attitude, which makes things change immediately. In other words, basically, you're saying to yourself, “Unstick.”

Q: Thank you, sir.

VR: Now! Now. “Unstick now.” And it's not forceful, but it is. It's effortless, and at the same time, it's very one-pointed, very direct. “Oh, Guru Rinpoche, please take this obstacle away. Go away.” That's what the happy people do.

Q: It's your wish?

VR: Yeah, it's your sincere wish. “Go.” And if they don't go that easily, step on them like a small bug.

Q: Is that devotion?

VR: Which one?

Q: Your wish.

VR: Your wish, yes, it is devotion. You know, when you have a lover, you say, “I wish I could be with you.” When you want money, you say, “I wish I could have some of you.” When you want a new car, you say, “I wish I could drive you.” All those things you wish, right? What's the essence of wish?

Q: Intention.

VR: No, more. Devotion is the essence of wish. Devotion is like fire, water, wind, earth. It's like elemental consciousness. Devotion is not a concept. Anyway, you have to practice in order to come upon that. It doesn't actually happen. But at a certain point, you have to crank it up. Like I said earlier, at a certain point, you really have to crank it up. And crank it up doesn't mean create a concept. It means intensify one's practice. You know, we all practice at a certain level, and we practice and we practice, and a certain point—uhnh. Nothing happens and there's a big desert. And every experience is like one grain of sand in that desert. Just one little grain of sand—every experience. So at a certain point you have to pick up the sand, put it in your mouth and chew it, and hear the sound of the sand grinding between your teeth, because there is no other sound. That kind of intensity has to happen, and that that's devotion. When you feel that, you have devotion for your teachers because you know what they're talking about. And then you do it that way.

Q: Speaking, sir, of these obstacles, I personally experience some sort of intensifying and then great deal—great unrelenting claustrophobia in various and sundry forms, and I was wondering if you could say anything about that.

VR: Well, they're all different forms, right?

Q: Right.

VR: So therefore they have no basic reality. So the unrelenting claustrophobia is the dharmakaya. Merge your mind with that.

Q: Thank you.

VR: Try it. If it doesn't work, call me in the morning. [Laughter.] And if I don't answer, try it again. [Laughs.]

Well, ladies and gentlemen, we should close at this point. The main thing I would like to say is keep it very, very simple. The more you talk about it, the more you think about it, nothing happens. Just practice in an ordinary way, but practice with teeth and claws. Keep that edge constantly. And no matter what lineage there is, whether you look at a hinayana lineage, mahayana lineage, vajrayana lineage, any teacher will tell you that keep that edge constantly, sit right at the edge of your mind, and relax right there. That's the main point. That's how to practice. Sit right at the edge of your mind and relax right there. The rest of it is just a lot of commentaries on the same thing. So, having said that....

HOST: Sir, it has been remarkable, wonderful, and auspicious to have you with us. We've had an opportunity to glimpse many things over the course of working together for a few days. The—glimpsing the possibility of mind and phenomena as being not separate is quite extraordinary. Glimpsing the possibility of Vajradhara and Mr. Beckerman as being not separate—[laughter] has been unspeakable. And glimpsing the possibility of Berkeley and San Francisco as being not separate has been utterly delightful.

VR: Fruition. [Laughter.]

HOST: Yeah. So— [VR laughs; laughter.] so, it's impossible to say anything but thank you, and please come back again and again. It's our great joy that you could be with us for this period of time.

VR: Thank you. Thank you so much. On behalf of my guru and my lineage, I thank you. Well, I will do so. There's nothing to build and nothing to take away. This is a good dharma place. Therefore we should enrich it constantly

with our practice. That's it. And when you see the seasons change and all the flowers blooming or dying, when you see a man walking his cat or a cat walking his man [laughter], you should have some sort of sense of rejoicing in the phenomena. And that is none other than your mind. When you feel bad with your meditation practice, don't be angry with yourself. When you feel good with your meditation practice, don't exalt yourself. In any case, don't do anything. That's the whole point. This victorious lineage, which is called the Kagyü, is founded on the rock of egolessness. On that rock, various things grow, such as the six paramitas, and the four orders of tantra. Those are just adornments of the basic state of mind, of the buddhas of the three times. If you tune into that, you have nothing else to practice about. I'm fortunate to be one of those who managed to steal a key to the treasure source of dharma, and I keep it with me always. I'm also not stingy about opening the door. That is our lineage —Kagyü lineage. Marpa told his students, and especially one who was holding back the teachings, the tantra teachings, from the others, he said, "You shouldn't be so stingy, you know." This lineage actually does circulate, and in fact, in this time and in this age the Kagyü lineage has spread all over the world, more than any other Tibetan lineage, because it doesn't hold back the teachings from anybody. As secret as they are, they're secret to your mind until your mind opens up to them, and then they're not secret anymore. So please practice and enjoy the benefit. Thank you.