



VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN
LIBRARY & ARCHIVE
TRANSCRIPT

VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN

Intensive Training Seminar (I.T.S.)

“Protecting the Mind: Discipline Beyond Hope and Fear”

Karme Chöling
Barnet, Vermont

September 2, 3 & 5, 1977

Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin Library & Archive
P. O. Box 821
Ojai, California 93024

This is an unedited transcript from the collection of the Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin Library & Archive and may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, without permission. Any such permission does not constitute publication, and no publication herein is made or intended.

Copyright © 1977 Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin. All rights reserved.

Talk One

Transcribed by: Unknown
Checked by P. Rosemond

Talk Two

Transcribed by: Unknown
Checked by Doug Small, May 25, 1998

Talk Three

Transcribed by: Unknown
Checked by Roland Cohen, November 1998

Talk One

September 2, 1977

Intensive training session. Intensive training session means that all of you are required to do three things: to practice meditation in the form which is taught by our lineage, represented here at Karme-Chöling. Second, to study the material we discuss in terms of study groups and your own personal study. And third is to participate completely in the environment of Karme Chöling. So we have practice, study, and action. Those three things are required of you.

Our subject is in three parts: first part concerning mind, the second its manifestations, and third its protection, or discipline. When we talk about mind, generally we have no idea what we are saying. We say, “My mind is completely chaotic,” or we say, “I had a peaceful mind,” or we say that everything’s in the mind, depending on how much we have heard or what we have been taught to believe. In terms of Buddhist practice, we are concerned with mind. Mind is the issue, is the practice, and the fruition. And when we talk about mind, we have to actually explore what we mean in concrete terms, rather than having some vague sense, some delusion. We should actually explore and define what we mean by mind.

We could say that our whole environment—this room, our bodies, our intentions, our subject matter—all are contained in mind. When we look at our world, our lives, in terms of who we are, what we do, what we want, what we don't want, we could say that all is mind. If we consider that mind to be an entity, a personage, such as divine mind or demonic mind, than we are not truly understanding mind as such. When we say that all of this environment, including our intentions, hopes, dreams, and fulfillment is mind, we are not talking about some kind of a deity, whether abstract or concrete, we are not talking in terms of a personification, or we are not talking in terms of a principle. Both of those views are mistaken. Mind as personification is just gross stupidity. Mind as a principle is devious and deceitful. So what do we mean by mind?

According to the Buddhist tradition, there are—mind is divided in three types. The first is what's called functional mind, organizational mind, which is the basic logic of inherited training, what we have understood as necessary to function as human beings. And that consists of two parts. The first, when we talk about mind, mind means the organization of the sense experience. Sense experience, as we know, five senses occur and have some connection with each other. Otherwise, we have isolated smell, isolated touch, isolated taste. But we don't. In our experience we have those five senses related to each other through the factor of functional mind, what's called the sixth sense consciousness in Buddhism. That factor which connects the five senses relates them to each other, which is

very basic, primitive, simple mind. Second mind, second part of that functional mind, relates to how we function, how we exist in a practical level as human beings. In other words, the aspect of mind which knows that in order to heat water, you must have fire. And also knows that if you don't turn off the heat, the water evaporates, and the pot burns. Very simple functional mind. If we don't close the screen door, the bugs come in. And that mind is called *sems* in Tibetan. How to exist on a very basic level. There are all kinds of examples which we could go over in that, but I think the point is clear. It's kind of a mind which, it's not necessarily creative, particularly, or complicated. It's very straightforward. Putting on clothes when it's cold, that kind of mind. Now then, there's the mind of putting on what kind of clothes and knowing the nature of clothes. If you wear wool in the winter, it's warmer than silk. This second kind of mind, second aspect of mind, is the inquisitive and analytical kind of mind, which seeks to know the nature of things, which seeks to find working mechanism. And this is called intellect, in Tibetan *lodrö*. Intellect. Which seeks to find out the philosophy, the content of the simple mind experience, the first mind we talked about. Seeks to analyze, conceptualize, uncover the working parts.

And third type of mind is the totality of the others, which is called intelligence, or brilliance, or insight, which is called *rikpa* in Tibetan. Which is the total of the others. In some sense, it's the idea of mastering and understanding the whole system of mind. In other words, how the whole thing works together. That sense of intelligence which is trust and confidence.

These explanations of mind are totally functional. They have nothing to do with “who” or “whose” mind we're talking about. On the other hand, they seem to suggest that we human beings, “we” possess this mind which has these categories. So we have basic split, dualism: “me” and “my mind.” In terms of the teachings, Buddhist teachings, nobody possesses this mind. No particular person possesses this mind. But the teachings talk in terms of the function of mind: what mind is.

Now how is that of any use to us? So now we know how mind functions. So what? It's the same as any kind of accumulation of information. We have it, therefore, we can go home. But then we have this question of protecting and hope and fear. It's part of our title. If mind simply functions the way we have outlined, then what is the need for protection? It simply goes on that way. But somehow, we have this uncertainty and nagging suspicion that we don't know what's being said. Or, at the same time, we don't know if we are understanding it, even though we hear it. We have those functions happening right now. Simple sense function of hearing, along with the other senses of being in this room, which is acknowledged. Then we have the sense of trying to understand with intellect what's happening. And then we have occasional flashes of understanding the whole thing. And, along with that, we are suspicious and uncertain whether or not what the speaker is saying makes any sense, on the one hand. And on the other hand, if it does, do we understand it? And that is the notion of hope and fear, which seems to come in somehow. And the third, protection, could be viewed in two ways: one being, “I must understand it; therefore, I'll

assume that I do.” Or, the other is “I have no idea whatsoever what this person is talking about, therefore, I should find out a method of understanding.”

It is our basic situation in this I.T.S. for the next few days, the quality of our experience, of our mind experience. The problem, according to the Buddhist teaching, is a notion that develops that there is a split, there is a sense of an entity who possesses this understanding of mind. Which causes the three functions to become personalized, and therefore produces the necessity to protect such functions. This process of personalizing we call ego, which may or may not exist. And that also is our exploration and our sense of journey in this Intensive Training Session. Is there an understanding which is complete? Is there a communication between us in terms of mind, in terms of our relationship, our function together? Or is there some problem?

The whole thing makes sense, except for the fact of ourselves. Without this business of self, we would have absolutely no problem. So we make an attempt to protect the mind, which is said to be purely functional and happens anyway. So what need is there of protection? If it's simply a matter of curiosity, and we come here to Karme Chöling to understand the mind and discipline. And if it's so that mind functions in the way we have outlined, then we should understand it immediately. Are there any questions?

QUESTION: Could you talk about the ego in terms of the five skandhas? Is, does the protection that takes place have anything to do with that, when you spoke about ego?

VAJRA REGENT: Yes, it certainly does. Which I thought we could get into later on. But basically, the skandhas, five skandhas. For those of you who never heard the term, *skandha* means “heap.” And five skandhas means five sets or five collections of process, which is a kind of confusing factor in terms of these three aspects of mind. Which is brought about by some basic question of “Who am I?” which happens continually in our lives, in our moment-to-moment existence. Who explodes—or shall we say expands, rather than explodes. The basic sense of uncertainty expands and creates a network of reaffirmation of the question “who,” without providing any answer. “Who am I?” gets so many facets, so many little parts, so many cobwebs, that the original sense of uncertainty is very far away, and therefore, understanding it. So skandhas figure in on our whole discussion, which we'll talk about more in the next few days.

QUESTION: Ösel, I think in going over the way you outlined mind, it seemed that there are four sections: the first, the functional mind, and then what you spoke of as the *sems*, the *lodrö*, and the *rikpa*. Are they three aspects of the sixth consciousness?

VR: No, no. Sixth consciousness is part of *sems*. Could say, or just could say it's just simply part of sense consciousness.

In the back.

QUESTION: Are you saying that we feel a need to protect our mind because we don't understand what our mind is? I mean, it's—

VR: Yes.

Q: Okay. Because I guess lots of times I think it's a question of first feeling that you don't understand the world, and that it might eventually get back that you don't understand what your mind is.

VR: That's a very good point. That's how the whole thing comes about. Perception of the world is quality of mind, but somehow it turns around, and we feel the world is perceiving us. Therefore, we feel the need for protection. Like asking a question and getting an answer, and the people around giggling and sense of the room, you know. Who's who?

Q: Thank you.

VR: That's a good point. I must have answered a whole three other questions at the same time. [Laughs]

QUESTION: Are you saying that the reason we protect our mind is because we regard it as a possession of the self? And if so, does that imply that self automatically feels the need to protect its possessions?

VR: That's correct. First of all, I don't think we know how to protect our mind in any case, but we attempt to protect our possessions, which we assume are ours.

Q: Well, following that through, is the boogieman, so to speak, the self, or the idea that the self has to possess things?

VR: Well, [laughs] in terms of the idea, we have to actually uncover where the idea came from. Otherwise, the idea of self doesn't make any sense. If we say, "Is it the self that's the boogieman?" then we have the idea of self which doesn't make any sense. But we have no idea where this idea came from, how it originated. So it's more basic, that simply discursive level. It involves penetration of any kind of notion: protection, mind, self, idea.

QUESTION: Your idea of penetration—is it not another idea to be penetrated?

VR: Certainly is. But since we arrived here to Karne-Chöling and have no idea what we're doing here except the fact that we feel we could find out something. Then penetration into the nature of our mind, existence, here should be our first order of business.

Q: A further question. Is that possible through discussion at all?

VR: Through discussion? Well, discussion is the second aspect of mind we talked about, the lodrö, intellect. The possibility of penetration to the essence is not really what we think. It's simply a matter of seeing things as they are. In other words, discussion as discussion as this second sense of mind, probing mind—if we can actually experience its function without the sense of possession of that function, then we have penetrated.

Q: It seems that if you do penetrate, then the question no longer is a question particularly of what you're protecting, or what to protect, or who's protecting.

VR: Yes. Is that what it seems?

Q: No, it is.

VR: That's what it is.

Q: Is it essence of protection, protecting this basic uncertainty?

VR: Well, I think protection can obviously be viewed from the point of view of survival, which is the way we generally view it. On the other hand, we can view it from the point of view of discipline, which is not survival of mind as such. Because it seems that mind as such doesn't need to be encouraged to survive. It simply functions. Our problem with protection is the protecting against, not being able to see the functions clearly.

Q: But is this uncertainty, sort of, you were saying that we are losing this essential uncertainty by complicating the whole matter by creating something which doesn't exist. If we put the questions and draw logical conclusions—

VR: Right.

Q: —that's what usually science does, produce something which doesn't exist, so this uncertainty seems to play some extremely, I feel, important role.

VR: Yes! [Laughter] Quite true, yes. If there is no blockage between us in terms of mind function, there is no question of understanding. If there is, it is uncertain of whether or not we understand our own mind or what's going on. So it does play a very important part in our discussions.

Q: So it implies that once the necessity of understanding is removed, this event, the uncertainty, becomes just another concept?

VR: Well, if the necessity to understand is removed, perhaps we become like trees and rocks. [Laughs] So we can't quite remove that necessity to understand.

Q: So there is no way out. [Laughter]

VR: Now, which function of mind would you say that statement was?

Q: Which function would be that?

VR: As we discussed.

Q: Well, it is sort of pigeonholing, which will be—analytical part.

VR: Right. Verging on rikpa, which is some sense of total environment.

Q: Yes. Thank you.

QUESTION: Can you hear me? [Laughter] Could you say more about protection from the point of view of discipline, because at this point the word becomes, to me, incredibly loaded. We have, for instance, protectors of the dharma, lokapalas, dharmapalas, not to mention protection cords—[laughter]

VR: Not to mention protective devices.

Q: —and devices—

VR: Yes.

Q: —protection from the point of view of discipline.

VR: Protection from the point of view of discipline is what we are going to continue to discuss. But the first aspect of protection is to understand the ground or the basis for having any sort of protection at all. So in terms of this particular I.T.S. and this journey together, from the first step we should have some understanding of the ground that we're walking on, the ground that we intend to protect. Which is some kind of process of looking at mind, what we call mind. So that's the first aspect of protection, to be able to see what we're going to protect.

Q: I see.

QUESTION: Testing. Testing.

VR: Doesn't test either way.

Q: There's a sense that I get that we're—it's like we're almost looking, trying to look at the back of our heads.

VR: Mm-hmm. That's very good. Yes.

Q: We're protecting ourselves against the need to be protected. And somehow that has to dissolve in and of itself, since it's going to happen anyway, if it's going to happen. But if that sense is happening, then I'm sort of setting myself up to be frustrated, and there's just no way out of that dilemma.

VR: Well, not exactly. The point there is, are we setting ourselves up to be frustrated particularly in this case? Is that a function of mind?

Q: To be frustrated... is to be frustrated.

VR: To set ourselves up to be frustrated. According to the outline it doesn't seem to come in anywhere.

Q: But the experience of frustration definitely, happens—

VR: How did it happen? [Laughs] How does that happen? Now, we can do it two ways. We can take that to be a hot potato, or big mistake, or our big mistake for coming here in the first place to set ourselves up to be frustrated to hear these things. Not only hear these things, but to have to be here in this place in Vermont, and not only that, to sit and meditate and all the rest of it, just to be more frustrated. Or we can take that process of mind and look at this frustration. How does it fit into our life experience in terms of just simple functioning mind, analytical mind, or intelligent insightful mind? So that's where we get into the idea of discipline, turning back.

QUESTION: I have to state how I'm feeling about all of this. You started analyzing the mind, and I felt very split, like here's a piece of my mind, here is a piece of mind, mind here, and a piece of my mind here. And I was getting a sense of dead seriousness. Really dead. I'm glad I've heard a few people laugh. [Laughter] Is this a part of the process of finding out what is, is? That we're going to go through a real analytical session and dissect the mind? Or is there going to be some holistic approach to this experience?

VR: Holistic?

Q: Yes, holistic in the sense of is my mind, are you seeing my mind as some kind of a compartmentalized pieces up there—

VR: Well, which you say is your entire being.

Q: —or is it a part of my entire being?

VR: Part of your entire intelligence?

Q: Or are you telling me—

VR: Is your mind part of your entire intelligence?

Q: Yes.

VR: Is it?

Q: I feel it is. I feel it's, I'm all connected.

VR: What's the other part? Or parts.

Q: I feel that all my parts are interconnected.

VR: Thighbones connected to the knee... [Laughter] Yes, I have no quarrel with that. Sure. Absolutely. But if you say “holistic,” then you have “part-istic.”

Q: Yes. My feeling was that what I was hearing from you was a real, some kind of a splitting up of all the little parts up there. And is that the purpose?

VR: That's what you were hearing from me?

Q: Yes. And my feeling was, I was feeling very uneasy about that, and, you know, like I'm in some kind of an analytical seminar, which is going to make me feel even more split when I leave here.

VR: Well, one never knows, to begin with, what happens when you leave. That's the sense of split in itself. See what I mean? “When I leave here, I might feel even more split than I feel right now.”

Q: True, I might! It's so scary.

VR: Yes. Well granted, granted. Granted. I think that that's quite true. That when we approach mind as such and start to look at split, the idea of split, then it gets quite scary.

Q: But you're creating that. You're helping to create that right now.

VR: Me? [Laughter]

Q: And that's what's a little scary for me.

VR: Me? [Laughs; laughter] No, I'm not. I just explain the teachings according to the way they've been taught. I'm not trying to create any splits. [Laughs]

Q: I've created my own feeling, I recognize that.

VR: Aha.

Q: But I still have the feeling that I'm not all together, that some, you know, up there are not little compartments, with—

VR: Well then, when you leave, there won't be any problem as well. Unless you feel that there are forces [laughs] which are going to split up that holistic mind and send you out in a basket after four days. Now how could that be? It doesn't make sense. If we are total, if there's a sense of totality, then how can that be split up? If it can be, then we have a question. If we have a question, it's not necessarily a need to fear, but actually is a part of the totality, comes back around again. But that needs a little discipline. Obviously. Otherwise, we feel at the mercy of any kind of philosophy or weird practice or intrusion on our holistic world, that could come any moment. By accident, we came here. What accident was that? See what I mean? We got ourselves in this world somehow. And if there is a question, we have no recourse but to explore and to look at it. From my point of view, that's not the problem. It may be scary, but it's not a problem. It's a matter of just looking.

QUESTION: You give us an outline, an original plan of what is in mind, and then comes the question of basic frustration, which seems very much to be there. And the question is: does the frustration...well, is the outline wrong for failing to include the basic frustration, or is the basic frustration somehow not really there? Is it somehow some sort of a joke that we haven't picked up on yet? When I look into my mind, if I can put it that way, I don't have the sense that there were the original components of mind which you outlined, and then later on, the frustration came up, and that it's therefore not a part of the structure of my mind, and that therefore it's possible to transcend it. I have the sense, well, the basic frustration seems to be a part of the original structure of mind. It feels to me, from my experience, as though this frustration ought to have been included in your outline. On the other hand, there is very definitely the sense that this frustration is something that I possess. That this frustration is not me. So here I am, my experience not conforming at all to your outline.

VR: It's not my outline.

Q: Yes, I realize that. [Inaudible]

VR: Okay. [Laughs] Not conforming at all?

Q: Well, I suppose the “at all” shouldn't be in there. [Inaudible]

VR: Not conforming completely?

Q: Yes.

VR: There's some question of a segment which doesn't seem to be included. From the point of view of the teaching, all the segments are included. In reality, this is the way mind is. Now you say, “There's something missing there,” and you call it “frustration” at this point, or whatever you want to call it. Now, from the point of view of the teaching, that frustration is called the second aspect of intellect.

Q: The second aspect of intellect?

VR: The second aspect of mind, lodrö, intellect.

Q: Oh, yes.

VR: But somehow, we have put this painful quality of frustration, calling frustration as something that belongs to us, as an alien injection of some kind. Something that is not so good, doesn't fit into a neat package. Now, as with our friend, is it my fault? Or your fault? Is it the fault of the outline, is it the fault of the environment? What is mind anyway?

Q: Well, it would seem to me that I have a problem in seeing how my frustration relates to your outline, shall we say. But I'm not quite sure what kind of a problem this is. And to what extent it really is a problem, and to what extent I make it a problem. There's a certain confusion as to the nature of the problem.

VR: Exactly. So therefore, we talk about protecting the mind and discipline which goes beyond hope and fear. Therefore, we have such a program as Intensive Training Session to actually look into that question of whether or not it's a problem.

QUESTION: Good evening.

VR: Good evening.

Q: I'm French speaking, so I would like that you would go beyond or further away from just precise intell...analysis, and that I will get my nervousness down, and that you would explain it in an evolutionary point of view, of why are human beings on the planet earth having this incarnation and this spiritual trip to do? Connecting line, what is the real problem, why should we suffer, and why should we look into mind, and why are we not just trees and rocks, and what about life after death? For example. Like, I've been meaning to ask what the Buddhists are saying, what is the purpose of reincarnations of human beings on earth? Is this what maturity would be for a human being, to awaken, and then we would do other trips whatever? And if you can answer any one of those nasty questions?

VR: One of them? [Laughs]

Q: Yes.

VR: Well, the definition of a human being or sentient being is one who possesses mind.

Q: Is mind of the cosmos, everything that exists, is there... my question is mostly on the evolutionary. Why should we become ignorant or naive children, and then grow up to ultimately this question? And here now, and why do we live after that—once we realize, what's the fun of living? What's the purpose of living, once you look into mind?

VR: Once you look into mind?

Q: Once you have the satori, for example, or that your mind is enlightened. Now here, you talk in front of us, and we are supposed to, whatever, what's the purpose of mind, do you know that?

VR: Well, there are three. First is function, getting in and out of your car, learning how to turn on the car. Second is inquiring at the nature of the ignition and how the ignition actually starts the motor. And the third is the motor itself and the body and how it's all put together, therefore making what we call a car. That's the purpose of mind.

Q: Well, are there notions of joy or love or other notions?

VR: Well, there're all kinds of notions. "I have a great car," you know. "It's a fantastic car." All kinds of notions, sure.

Q: Indifference and you become everything?

VR: There's indifference. I just have a car, you know, just an ordinary car. You mean, what's the purpose of life?

Q: Of being aware of life?

VR: Of being aware of life, that's more delicate issue. Because then we have the question of who's being aware of life.

Q: And that's why I talked about life after death.

VR: Life after death... you mean who's being aware of life after death? Well, that's the same, that's just being aware of life, I think. You know, that's the same question.

Q: Once I asked a question like this to Mr. Rinpoche, and he told me, "Meditate, my dear, meditate." Well, I didn't meditate very much, so I ask you the question again. [Laughter] I didn't make the people laugh so much though, the first time.

VR: The first time? Yes, well, probably the first time it was deadly serious audience. Deadly serious audience. Life after death... What was the first one?

Q: Of my questions?

VR: Yes. Oh, we answered that—mind, the three functions.

Q: Well, I will give you a parallel with another theory, and I would like you to answer what you understand.

VR: Sure. Sure.

Q: The spiritists' theory, in which, for example, entities or other types of egos or spirits—

VR: Yes.

Q: —are existing until they are called pure spirits, and ultimately, divinity or cosmos. But until people become pure spirits, they are lower types of spirits, and we are among these spirits incarnated here now. And perhaps that satori is when the spirits realize what should really be done, become higher, higher, higher spirits. or higher, higher, or an encompassing mind?

VR: Well, according to what I have understood, the basic problem is this idea of a spirit recognizing itself. As soon as a spirit or a mind recognizes, or human being, recognizes itself, then we have the creation of this multi-various confusion of a level, level, level, level, level, level, level, until we become pure. Therefore, we have to go through tremendous kinds of climbing of Mount Everest of our mind, and suffer tremendously in order to become pure. Which is another level or another part of the confusion. According to what I've understood, that is the problem in itself, this identification with some sense of split, of the impure becoming pure. The idea or the process we are trying to look into is simply how that creation of thought occurred. How that creation of mind occurred, and whether or not there's any reality to this business of level, level, level, all the rest of it. And in order to do that, we have to see what's exactly here first. Rather than trying to get the game plan of how to get to level twenty-seven or whatever level it might be. If we don't understand what level this is, how could we possibly get to pure, get to the top level? Doesn't make any sense to me, anyway.

Q: But you're one person seated there in front of us, you know. You're higher than us right now?

VR: Yes.

Q: And we all stood up to receive you, you know, and what is this also?

VR: Hmm.

Q: I might be a nice person, nicer than you. Or a more pure flower than this tree. Or this, I agree with you, it's not a matter of argumentative or preconceptions of purity—

VR: Hmm.

Q: —will be more clear vision that may be another way of seeing the purity that I had in mind at least, whatever... I will leave...

VR: Well, yes, that might be so.

Q: Thank you for your patience with me anyway.

QUESTION: I'm still not clear about...I want to continue the analogy of the car a little bit.

VR: Yes.

Q: My question is, what is the position of the teaching of the tradition, Tibetan Buddhist tradition, on the purpose, on where do you go with the car once you understand, assuming—

VR: Where do you go? [Laughs]

Q: —assuming you do understand. In other words, my question is, does the teaching have a statement about the purpose of the evolutionary and the learning process that we are going through? Is there any, any, any teaching relating to that?

VR: The purpose seems to be to discover or to see—somebody drink a lot of water before this? [Some people are leaving the room to deal with an emergency] The purpose seems to be to discover the function.

Q: I might misunderstand. It seems to me that discovery is method, and is that the end in itself? In other words, are the means and the ends identical in view of the teaching?

VR: I think so. But in view of our confusion, they're quite different.

Q: I was hopefully not speaking from a point of view of confusion.

VR: [Laughs] But you have to speak from both points of view, in some ways. If you say simply that means and ends are the same, then we might as well pack up and forget it.

Q: Well, why don't we do that?

VR: Because we don't believe it's true. Therefore, we have means which appear to bring us to the goal, which is the means.

QUESTION: When you were speaking earlier about basic frustration arising out of analytic process, were you saying that, as we understand the process that the mind is going through, that's generating the frustration, that we diffuse its power or the power of the frustration? Not a dissociative mechanism way, but...

VR: Yes. I understand what you mean. That the frustration we have is simply a matter of ignorance.

Q: Then by understanding the process that's producing it, it may still be produced—the process may still be running on, but we're no longer frustrated by it, as it were. Is that it?

VR: [Laughs] Well, it's a little more complicated than that. It seems to me that when you say, “we are no longer frustrated by that,” there's some sense of hope. Which we'll go into more in detail tomorrow. In terms of actual mechanism of that frustration of hope and fear. That's something you should sit on.

Well, I think we'd better stop at this point. Our lineage, the Kagyü lineage, is called the practice lineage. And the practicing lineage is not simply concerned with slick statements and good rapport. And is certainly not concerned with entertainment for ego's sake. You

paid your money, and you should get your money's worth. What you feel your money's worth might be an entirely different question altogether than what we, as lineage, feel that your money is worth. What we feel is that you should, since you came around here and got yourself into this particular I.T.S., you should do it one hundred percent wholeheartedly. And that includes your disagreement and your inquisitiveness, your complacency, your fear, your inspiration, aspiration, perspiration. Which means that you should practice meditation.

Meditation, to briefly explain, is an undoing process. The process of undoing the complication of belief in a separate self, or belief in something alien, something outside. As we discussed, frustration or disappointment or whatever as being something coming at you, projected from the enemy. Meditation is a process of undoing the ignoring quality. The quality of fog. Which has built up for a very long time and created blocks in understanding and communication. Which it seems it should be quite simple to do, since mind is, in general, the same function, no matter what kind of human being we are. So in order to connect with each other and make some sense of money's worth, in a real sense of money's worth, because as far as the Kagyü lineage is concerned, results are very important. So I trust that all of you will take advantage of the opportunity of being here. No matter whether you've heard this a million times or for the first time, it's always a new situation and a fresh situation. So we have our schedule already announced? Begins tomorrow with sitting, and then breakfast, whatever, and continues, study groups. Try to keep your mind as it is. And we'll continue our discussion tomorrow. Good night.

Talk Two

September 3, 1977

Continuing our discussion, the aspects of mind which we talked about yesterday are not particularly precious in terms of what we should aim for in our practice. What we have discussed is simply that mind functions in a particular way, and that is simply the fact. However, since we have exposed these qualities of mind, we have also exposed the qualities of ego, or neurosis, as we've been accustomed to call it. Therefore, what should be a simple process has become somewhat questionable. I speak, you listen, you ask a question, I give an answer. A seemingly simple process evokes tremendous doubt, evokes a sense of tenuous quality, sense of uncertainty. These three qualities of mind which we discussed have no allegiance particularly to confusion or to enlightenment. This is a very essential point for everyone who is here trying to practice the buddhadharma. Buddhist practice is not particularly concerned with the highs and the lows, but rather, concerned with things as they are.

So we have explained mind in terms of those three aspects. And at the same time we have unearthed, which is very good word, a problem, which is the fundamental problem of our life as human beings. And simply stated, it is that this person, as speaker, talked about mind as A, B, C. That person, as listener, suddenly, felt threatened. "Does this person as speaker understand more than I do?" or "Does this person as speaker confirm my existence, or does it reject my existence?"

We had this discussion of the idea of coming in here to Karme Chöling feeling okay, fine, and hearing the first talk, and suddenly, some sort of rupture, erosion, taking place. The thought at that point "Is this a deliberate erosion? Is the speaker deliberately trying to erode my sense of security in order to seduce me into his trip, convert me into that particular way of thinking?" which on the surface seems to me is just another system of thought. But regardless of our rationalization, the rupture actually takes place, and we are suddenly fragile and uncertain. Depending on our training, on how we feel: confident, self-sufficient, perhaps we have a slight little crack, perhaps we have a big fissure, we have a big erosion. Nevertheless, the same experience occurs, which is basic dualism. This dualism is the product of mind, as mind has the capacity to project. And that sense of projection is energetic, powerful, it creates our world. Society, government, literature, family, friends, religion, philosophy is a projection of mind.

Then what is so startling to us about these teachings, these Buddhist teachings? What is so startling is simply that Buddhist teachings talks about exactly how the projection occurs, which for some reason we have clouded over, for some reason has become so

removed from our basic sense of being that we are taken back immediately to some sense of that initial dualistic split. Everybody has a different sort of explanation of that in their own thinking mind, rational mind, everybody has their own sense of arrogance of “me.” But still, there's a question.

So our object in terms of this particular talk is to explore that first sense of other. Let us say that perception is without complication—that is our basic statement. We perceive things directly, clearly, precisely as they are. But somehow, the energy of that perception and the directness of it produces some kind of ricochet, some kind of bouncing back. In the process of that bouncing back, consciousness occurs. When we talk about consciousness, we are talking about sense of self, sense of a perceiver. To begin with, we are talking simply about perception. But perception being so direct creates this image of perceiver, whom we call so-and-so, whatever our name is, and whatever our history is. And this is our version of genesis.

At that point there is a sense of panic, which is sort of unconditional panic. Perceived object. And at the moment of perception, there is complete clarity. Immediately afterwards, there is a space which is totally uncertain. That uncertainty gives birth to a reference point, which is ourselves as perceivers of the object. And as perceivers of the object, we are threatened because we thought, or we felt, or we experienced perception simply, directly, and then there was some sort of gap. From that gap, in very rapid succession comes the belief in ego.

Now, this belief is an overlay, according to the teachings, on the basic function of mind. And that overlay, that production of ego-centered world or ego version of reality, takes the form of the five skandhas, or collections, heaps. And these collections are continual sense of reinforcing identity because of the reality of uncertainty. Basically, we as ego entities, if there is any such thing, have no idea what's going on, so we produce like a silkworm, continually weaving until the entire process is solid. And therefore, when we hear such teachings as this, there is a shock and a sense of erosion. Why? Because directly, immediately, in a glimpse, in a moment, we experience that sense of uncertainty again.

These skandhas or heaps are described as, first, sense of form. Form meaning from that sense of panic, the beginning of formation of identity as ego entity, as somebody, someone, which is a “Who am I?” question as we talked about last night.

Since that question itself throws us immediately back on uncertainty, we have to seek elsewhere, which produces a network of reinforcement called feeling. Feeling in this case means the experience of duality as more concrete: hot, cold, near, far, which has to be reinforced by added perception of that duality.

Third skandha is called perception, which is simply an affirmation or an echo of hot, cold, near, far. And fourth aspect, called conceptualization, is some sense of arranging that

experience of other and myself into categories with names, concepts. And fifth being our emotional reaction to the whole thing, which we call consciousness.

So in exactly a few micro-moments, whatever you want to call it, from panic to complete, full-blown ego entity. Everybody wonders, “How does that happen?” Actually, people wonder why that happens rather than how. How is much more intelligent. But generally, we think in terms of why. On the gross level it's “Why me?” And if we were theists we would say “Oh, Lord, why me?” Well, that's a good question—why me at all? Because of that basic sense of panic, we have assumed me. And when we are presented with authentic teachings, that assumption begins to have no basis.

You have practiced somewhat today, and so perhaps we are communicating at least at the level of confusion, which is actually very powerful. If we can talk in terms of our confusion, then we have made some headway into the fortress of assumption of ego, which is the cause of suffering, aggression, pain, whatever you want to call it. We are working with the idea of mind in terms of functional mind, in terms of subconscious mind, which is a matter of accumulated discursive thought, pictorial thought process, and emotions, or the highlights of mind. To begin to unravel this seemingly tight network of ego's trap, we have to begin with the simplest function, which is the sixth sense consciousness we talked about. Fact is when we hear, we don't hear as hearing. When we see, we don't see as seeing. What actually happens is we hear our invention of hearing, and we hear our invention of seeing.

So meditation practice is recommended, practice of shamatha is recommended as a beginning process to actually isolate that sense perception as it is, which is extremely matter of fact and very scientific approach. It has no dream of further greatness, no dream of further dejectedness, it is simply a matter of seeing, experiencing, the function of mind in terms of those six senses as we talked about, clearly and directly without projection, interpretation. That is our practice of shamatha meditation.

To begin with, what we actually experience is just chaos of gossip, of discursive thought, and tremendous blah, blah, blah. But occasionally, there is something direct that happens, occasionally some direct sense of just being here in terms of the senses. Sound of a car, bird chirping, sound of someone coughing in the room, very directly, clearly rings. Immediately upon perception of that sound, that sight, there is recognition of that perception and initial split, dualism—me and my perception. This is the stepping stone which we have to use. The point is there is no necessity, there is no reason whatsoever that we should know that we are hearing. The point is we should simply hear, which is knowing in itself.

So working, with a simple stepping stone, meditation practice, shamatha practice, gives us some insight to begin with. When we try, simply try to sit and meditate, there is so much of a problem, so much chaos, so much complication, which gives us some initial insight, which is the second aspect of mind we are talking about, some initial sense of

inquiry, some initial sense of curiosity about the fact that our minds seem to be so complicated. Which in itself encourages our practice, produces a sense of conviction that there is something to work on.

And as we continue in the practice, we begin to feel that sense of inquisitiveness as a sense of being. In other words, as natural content of mind, natural expression of mind, shall we say, which has no reason to affirm itself. But this process is very tedious and long and difficult one. It's not a matter of spoon feeding or aspirin approach to take away pain. Therefore, when we feel some initial sense of practice hitting us, coming back at us, our own projection, since we decided to come here and do this thing, that sense of panic has a feeling of, "Shall we leave? Let's get out of here! This is some kind of subversive, debilitating experience."

Quite the contrary. It's coming to terms with facts, coming to have some sense of acquaintance in a very direct way with who and what we are. And the question of mind as an appetizer becomes a full ten-course meal. The problem with indigestion is that we feel we're never going to get over it. Therefore, it is necessary for the teacher to encourage from experience, to encourage the students to continue. Some mild form of indigestion is bound to happen. In fact, it might even be worse than that. But if we are actually to understand completely, to realize completely, fully, potential of mind and the reality of mind, then we must begin to let mind be as it is. And we take that small step with shamatha practice, which may seem to be a revolution, but it's simply guerrilla warfare.

If you have any questions, we could have a discussion.

QUESTION: Since I've just started practice a couple of weeks ago, I'm interested in what, if any, sense of groundedness or relation with yourself or, you might say, making friends with yourself you could experience. What sense of it can you get when you're in the midst of all your beginning chaos and mental gossip?

VAJRA REGENT: Very basically, the point is not to try and retreat at that point, but actually experience that chaos and mental gossip as it is, which produces sense of being there, which is groundedness. In fact, the sense of panic is groundedness if you can stay there, be there with it. That's why we have path. It's important not to think that immediately we're going to be able to sit, achieve the whole thing. But just recognizing glimpse of mind as it is, is sufficient encouragement to continue.

Q: Can you hear me? So that for you, if that's what's happening is as valid as, say, the other thing you mentioned a few minutes ago of, say, by means of a sound or sight or whatever, of also a glimpse of being there.

VR: Absolutely. Chaos. The point is the reason why we don't hear the sound as such is because we're trying to cover up the chaos with some sense of artificial order, which is ego's quality. So to begin with, we have to experience the ground itself, which might be just expressed as chaos.

Q: Thank you.

QUESTION: The projection bounces and comes back in a distorted form. What is it bouncing off?

VR: You tell me.

Q: All I can see is some sort of hesitancy, that it realizes maybe that it's overextended and jumps back and comes back.

VR: Is there a real world outside of you?

Q: I wouldn't say outside of me particularly.

VR: Inside then?

Q: It's both, yes. And it's just skin in between.

VR: Skin in between? [Laughs; laughter]

Q: Well, if that, yes. [Laughs; laughter] Yes, there is a real world.

VR: Is the outside real or the inside? Outside is real [inaudible].

Q: Both.

VR: Inside is real. Skin in between. No skin in between.

Q: Well, the notion of boundary is something that we're forever deluding ourselves with.

VR: Yes? We are?

Q: Then I am, if you will. So your perception goes out into the environment and—

VR: What's the environment?

Q: Just the room.

VR: “The room.” Now, did we invent that word, “room,” or is there something real called “room”?

Q: Both, I would say. Are you hinting that it's just the result of karma?

VR: Who?

Q: That it's just situational patterning or continuation, continuing of past energies.

VR: Could be.

Q: I still don't see what it's bouncing against.

VR: Well, let's say, now you are bouncing against me. When I talk back to you, is that real talk?

Q: Yes.

VR: And it's understood by you.

Q: Yes. Somewhat.

VR: Then, who are you?

Q: Then who am I?

VR: When you are listening to me, who are you?

Q: Maybe a continuation of your speech. Maybe a—

VR: Then you are me! [Laughter; laughs]

Q: Maybe a human body sitting across the room.

VR: Human body.

Q: Yes.

VR: That's what you are then, a human body.

Q: Speaking in terms of normal English, yes.

VR: Then what we're bouncing off of is normal English. [Laughter]

Q: [Laughs] A theistic past.

VR: Well, normal English is what we say. Normal. Is that...see, the point is we're bouncing off some kind of reference point all the time. You're trying to understand what I said just now?

Q: Yes.

VR: How'd you do that? From what point of view?

Q: Point of view of wondering about the reference point.

VR: Which makes a reference point.

Q: Yes.

VR: Yes, very good. That's exactly what the meditation process is all about, of uncovering this mechanism of constantly creating a reference point, as if understanding were something that had to be manufactured. As we talked about yesterday, process of mind happens by itself.

I need you to put up your hand higher, as a reference point. It's a very simple function.

QUESTION: Did you say that in the shamatha practice we're not involved in the aspirin approach?

VR: Yes. That's right.

Q: How about in the hinayana approach at the beginning?

VR: Same thing. That's nothing to do with aspirin, particularly.

Q: What did you mean by that?

VR: Well, it's a matter of not particularly diluting pain.

Q: But looking for some relief, isn't it?

VR: No, not at all. It's looking for the origin.

Q: The—our first inspiration?

VR: Yes. Very first. Before you thought about relief. But that might be getting too far out. So let's take it from the point of view of relief. From the point of view of relief, we come upon a teaching like this, which offers no relief. So that puts chaos into perspective. Do you understand? If you come hungry to a food stand, and you assume that food is going to be there, you come up to the stand and you say, "I would like food." They say, "There's no food here. This is completely just your projection." And then immediately, that uncertainty, disappointment, makes you feel hunger completely. The same thing with practice. You come with the idea of achieving some release from suffering, and begin the shamatha technique, which doesn't offer any release that we can think of. No matter how we try and think of it, nothing happens. So then we hear a sound as a sound. In other words, the mechanism of ego is cracked, even momentarily.

QUESTION: If I gain some sense of security in my experience by judging it from some reference point, well, what is... So, okay, I refer all my experience to this reference point. What is the reference point referred to?

VR: Itself. That's the irony of the whole thing.

Q: So this one reference point holds the whole picture together.

VR: No. Reference point continually changes. Each time a new picture, refers to itself again.

Q: But it has some illusion of its own continuity, doesn't it?

VR: Yes. That's right. Illusion of its own permanent reference point, which doesn't happen. As you can tell when you practice sitting meditation.

Q: And so the result of this—that's the cause of our discomfort, one of the causes?

VR: I think that's the major cause, yes. We can never quite close the trap. Yes. Never quite secure all the battle stations. There's always some sense of we haven't finished the whole thing. Which in the case of sitting practice is our reference point, that uncertainty. [Laughs]

Peter?

QUESTION: When we sit, we get little glimpses of the mind as it is. At least I get little glimpses. And, but then what happens is that there's a temptation to add something extra and can never quite let it alone. So right away there's this thing of fogging it up again. And

so it seems that, seems to be no way we can stay with the sense of panic. Right away we have to create something right on top of it. It sort of seems like, I don't know, sometimes it seems like a real bind, like running in a circle. You see something, then put something on it, and then see something, put something on it.

VR: Yes, but the point there is that once you begin to see something and put something on it and see something and put something on it, you also begin to have a sense of expansion of including both processes. When you have that feeling of both processes being included, then the ego factor begins to diffuse itself. But it's simply a matter of practicing more.

QUESTION: I was wondering if the reference point of the reference point might be its opposite.

VR: Well, it could be interpreted to be its opposite, but that really doesn't matter. The fact that it is of itself is the humor or irony of the whole thing.

QUESTION: Last night you said you were going to talk more about the word “discipline,” and I was hoping maybe you could clarify what you mean or say a few words about the discipline.

VR: Well, what I meant as discipline is the practice of shamatha meditation, which we have been talking about. That sense of undoing the network of fortification by being simply with your mind as it is, whether it's chaotic or peaceful or whatever, whatever comes up in the context of practice, which is our reference point here. Practice of meditation, that's the reference point. Discipline is reference point. The question of reference point is simply a matter of acknowledging the transparent quality of the whole thing, which we have made solid again and again, our reference point, whether it's our BankAmericard or our trip to Bermuda or life in the country, getting back to nature, milking the cows, or our reference point of spirituality, and coming to Karne Chöling, whatever it is. In this case, we're all together: mind created reference point of practice, which has a sense of diffusing itself because nobody knows what it is when you actually sit with it. You say, “Well, now I think I'm practicing. I'm being with the breath. I'm being with the breath. Now I'm not practicing, now I think I'm practicing.” So you begin to see mind actually works all the time.

QUESTION: How does the shadow of the watcher in terms of vipashyana relate to— [laughs] I just took the house class—

VR: Is it a course for this course?

Q: No.

VR: No. Just a course. Okay. The shadow of the watcher...

Q: How does that relate to this process of seeing the mind?

VR: Well, the initial shadow is the practice itself, you as meditation student is a shadow, reference point, same thing.

Q: Maybe I mean the echo, then.

VR: Yes. Echo is a sense of knowing.

Q: And what you're talking about comes before the echo and the shadow and all that?

VR: I don't know what I'm talking about. [Laughter]

Q: [Laughs] Well, I don't either. [Laughter]

VR: Or maybe I don't know what you're talking about. [Laughs; laughter] What I'm talking about comes before the echo and the shadow? Now, look, in terms of the echo and shadow, what we're talking about is refining or recognizing the process of projection of mind, and projection as a reference point back to me as projector. And it goes along through shamatha-vipashyana practice. The boundaries become thinner and weaker.

Q: Well, I think I can answer it. What you said earlier, that what you're talking about has nothing to do with the enlightened mind or towards the, getting to the enlightened mind, reaching that state. So, and vipashyana does.

VR: [Laughs] Is that what I said?

Q: No. I don't know. Forget it. [Laughs]

VR: I'll do my best. [Laughter]

QUESTION: I wanted to know if, in seeing the mind as it is, or approaching to have a consciousness of the mind as it is, what place does paradox have in it?

VR: Paradox. Well, concept.

Q: Purely?

VR: Yes. But when you say, "purely," there's no such thing as purely concept. It started from the first initial panic, and it became concept. But when you use a word like "paradox," we're talking about a more sophisticated point of view of ego, which understands things like paradox, you know. So it becomes more solid. Paradox basically means confusion of two objects, object and subject. Subject and object confused. More sophisticated, it becomes two doctors. [Laughter]

QUESTION: On the question of this fundamental panic, trees and mountains don't panic, so it seems.

VR: [Laughs] Doesn't seem that they do!

Q: Well, what I want to know is, you know, you said it wasn't a terribly intelligent question about *why* the whole thing grows out of panic—

VR: Yes.

Q: —but even at that, I'll ask that. I'll also ask what is it that can possibly panic at a level where all there is, is just chaos or panic. And—

VR: Well, that's a good point actually. That's a very good point. First of all, what can panic is the concept of sanity. If you have chaos, you have sanity.

Q: So that there is even a more fundamental dualism at that point.

VR: Extremely fundamental dualism, yes. Basic, hardcore, me and you, this and that. Before there is any panic. Panic is a question of who. Who's controlling whom? Is it me or is it...

Q: Well, back to the fact that trees and mountains don't panic...

VR: Yes, the first one, yes.

Q: I'm just wondering, is it some distortion of intelligence that causes that whole thing to happen?

VR: That's correct. That's what we call ego. Distortion.

QUESTION: If the notion of ego is distortion, then the notion of nonego would be distortion as well. And we come back to the point where anything that we can encapsulate in words would be meaningless.

VR: No. Let's see. You said the notion of ego is distortion, makes the nonego distortion as well, which doesn't seem to fit.

Q: Who is coming up with the notion of nonego?

VR: You just said it, right?

Q: Well, the moment I say “me,” right, I create ego, and I create you, I create distortion.

VR: Right.

Q: So therefore, as long as I'm relating to those concepts as terms of reference, then I'm creating my own distortions and my own confusion.

VR: Exactly. That's why it's necessary to sit, practice sitting meditation. And then the clever quality begins to be more transparent, of that game of “me.” If I say, “me,” then obviously it's not me. If I say, “not me,” then it's me. But the whole game there just reinforces “me,” you know.

Q: So that brings us back to paradox, which I wish, I beg to suggest that paradox is simply a situation which transcends its terms of reference in speech.

VR: I don't think so.

Q: Like in reality there might be no paradox at all, no such thing. Only in our thinking, confused mind there is.

VR: Yes, but if you say that reality is without speech, then it's not reality as well.

Q: Granted.

VR: So we do talk to each other.

Q: It might be wise to confine our conversation to practical details like “hand me the screwdriver.” [Laughter]

VR: If that were possible. But that would only say that there is only one aspect to mind. As we discussed the other day, there are more than one. “Screwdriver” itself was manufactured by mind, not simply the “hand me.” If you were just going on the point of “hand me the screwdriver,” then you could say that the great Lord above created all screwdrivers to be handed to me. [Laughter] But it doesn't quite work that way. See? [Laughs]

Q: Yes.

VR: Yes, it's got so many different little corners. [Laughs; laughter]

QUESTION: Most therapies try to reinforce ego. How would you view the problem of insanity in terms of ego's transit?

VR: Well, insanity has different kind of connotations in terms of intensity of distortion. From the Buddhist point of view, ego is the basis of insanity, is insanity itself. The proportions of that might get completely outrageous. In other words, people use screwdriver to eat their food, whatnot, which is the whole process of not understanding mind as such. Everything gets jumbled up. In other words, when the world as we know it doesn't reinforce us as ego entities, and we actually become more frightened, more frightened, more frightened, until it gets to the point that screwdrivers become forks, plates become hats, and the whole thing gets jumbled up. Insanity. But simple insanity is the fact that we don't understand what's going on at all. Then we create a lot of shows about that, you know, plays.

QUESTION: Rinpoche says somewhere something about how ignorance is really very clever. Because it sees the whole situation and decides it doesn't want to go along with it, and so it will pretend that it doesn't really see the whole situation. So there's something very frivolous about it, something cowardly, because it does see the whole situation and then decides it will pretend that it doesn't. What does one do as a practitioner when one is confronted with this kind of cowardliness, this sort of frivolousness?

VR: Well, the basic thing is not to create another split out of that. What happens when people are, actually have some insight into, “This is what I've been doing,” there is a sense immediately of trying to reverse that and become the white knight. You know, suddenly you become “the Great Meditator” in your mind of suddenly reversing that whole trend, rather than actually staying with it, because it isn't over yet! [Laughter]

Q: So there's no place at all here for, one of the four actions I read somewhere is called destroying, there's no....

VR: [Laughs] We'd better wait on that!

Q: Thank you.

VR: Let's just create a nice environment for these things to happen in before we decide to destroy them! [Laughs] We have to first work on some sense of pacification. Those four actions you're talking about—the first one is pacifying, which is basically a shamatha practice of allowing a sense of spaciousness for chaos or pleasure, pain, whatever dualism occurs, to exist in basic space, which is meditation practice. Without judgment or trying to change it in any way, manipulate it.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, we should close our session this evening. And tomorrow we have what's called nyinthün, or all-day sitting practice, in which we have opportunity to experience this quality of mind that we are talking about, and opportunity to be unmolested by our projections, at least minimally. Opportunity to test a little bit as personal experience what we've been talking about. Some of you have never sat before probably, or maybe just a little bit, and might be very frightened about sitting all day. But think of it this way: you have managed to survive this far on hope and fear, there's a possibility of surviving tomorrow on the same basic mechanism [laughter]. On the other hand, there is a possibility as well to see those mechanisms, that protection, that sense of what needs to be protected and what genuine protection is in an environment of total practice situation. Which is extremely helpful, most beneficial thing we could possibly do in our time together these four days.

So I encourage everyone to sit the entire time, no matter if you have, I don't care how many badges you have in terms of hours sat, in terms of your authentic quality of being a practitioner, or your authentic quality of being a novice, whatever. Basically, we can generate that atmosphere in which duality can be exposed. As you sit tomorrow, remember that there is no particular instruction about having to change basic duality into something else. There is no particular instruction that by the end of tomorrow's sitting you should have achieved a particular seventh level or fifth level or anything like that. In fact, what you are asked to do is simply be with yourself as you are—do nothing for a whole day. The simplest thing any human mind can conceive of. [Laughs] It is a challenge, it is a threat, it is a promise, it is hope and fear together, and it's nothing at all, no big deal. Nobody's going to recognize you as a Maitreya, probably. Maybe somebody is! That would be interesting [laughter]. Maybe when you sit tomorrow, showers of light, rainbow light will come all over your head. Maybe you dissolve into dust [laughter] and become little pile of dust on the cushion, and we'll never see or hear about you again! Hope and fear. But everybody, do your best. Practice. We'll continue our discussion after tomorrow. Good night.

Talk Three

September 5, 1977

As we move along in our discussion, which is all too short considering the degree of chaos and complication which actually arises from the initial sitting practice of meditation, we should at this point review briefly the topic of mind and its protection. The basic structure of mind is not necessarily involved with any kind of self consciousness. However, the impact of the process seems to create some feedback, and at the same time seems to create some knower or doer or watcher of mind. So the initial impulse to protect is based on an entirely artificial entity, which we call ego.

At the same time, there is a genuine aspect to this desire to protect. As with any discipline, and especially with a spiritual discipline, the practitioner of that discipline has the idea that he or she can achieve the sum total of that discipline simply by spending a short time thinking about it or reading about it or doing a little practice of that discipline. And that sense of arrogance and ignorance is based on continual habitual pattern of ego, as we discussed yesterday. But that is exactly the stepping stone to the real protection of mind.

When we talk about real protection, what we mean is actually allowing mind to be as it is. So then, what is the protection? The protection is discipline to train the mind, or train the ego version of mind, to be as it is. Which we call spiritual discipline. But that trick has many different layers, and the spiritual path, according to the Buddhist teachings, is designed in order to uncover those layers by a continual process of trickery. In other words, what we're attempting to do is trick the mind to be as it is, or trick the ego version of mind, so that that which we call ego is seen as transparent and no different than the actual function of mind, as we discussed. In other words, the necessity for a watcher, necessity for a perceiver, a commentator, becomes obsolete, and intelligence functions unobstructedly.

But that is not accomplished overnight, or in four days. It is accomplished with a sense of inspiration first, followed by some kind of exertion, and continued with a sense of perseverance. In terms of inspiration we have the example of the Buddha, who, as a human being like ourselves, practiced this exact same discipline and achieved enlightenment. In other words, he allowed his mind to actually be as it is. And that sense of possibility is tremendously inspiring. If you sit, practice meditation as you did yesterday for a whole day, all kinds of eruptions, all kinds of disturbance, the task of simply training the mind to be still, seems enormous, let alone awakening inquisitiveness and insight. But in the case of the Buddha, we have a human being like ourselves who tried all sorts of disciplines, finally settled down and sat, practiced sitting meditation. And that kind of inspiration is necessary. In human terms, we are human beings living in a human world, therefore, we

don't have to rely on the cosmic, divine intervention to save us from our dreadful situation. Or, on the other hand, we don't have to sink lower and lower into depths of some kind of demonic fantasy. But rather, we can actually use the material that we have available, our own life situation.

In terms of exertion, we have two aspects under the heading of dharma, teaching. And that teaching involves the studying of the aspects of the path as has been taught uninterruptedly since the time of the Buddha. And the second aspect of that path—dharma—being practice of meditation. And both of these involve exertion, that type of mind which pushes, in a sense, exerts itself to find out, that inquisitive mind. And the third aspect is the perseverance along the path, which is embodied in the word “sangha,” or the community of practitioners who are doing so, who have done so, and actually demonstrate the function of mind, demonstrate the function of the path embodied in a place like this, Karne-Chöling. So these three aspects—buddha, dharma, sangha: inspiration, exertion and perseverance—are the guidelines for practice and the treading on this path of actual mind protection, or discipline.

The path itself is spoken about in three stages of development. The first, initial stage, called the hinayana, involves renunciation and discipline. Renunciation meaning the complete seeing clearly, the complete dropping of wishful thinking, frivolousness, fantasy, through discipline of sitting practice of shamatha and vipashyana meditation. With such precise, exact discipline we can actually see mind as it is, therefore, wishful thinking, hope and fear—same thing—is cut through, very basic level. Which is called the experience of hopelessness. It combines hope and fear.

And this hopelessness is the certain, certainty of the powerlessness of ego's pattern to reassert itself in terms of thought process, emotions. From ego's point of view, hopelessness is a devastating idea, very frightening, so therefore, we have so many comments about practice of meditation, especially Buddhist practice of meditation, as being worthless to humanity—from the politicians and whatever, socialists and whatnot saying, “Oh, well, all you do is sit around and do nothing.” Hopeless. Nothing's going to be accomplished, we're not going to make the world better—or worse for that matter—we're not going to do anything at all. Which immediately produces outrage of ego-centered mind, ego tendency, threat, suddenly falling off a cliff into bottomless pit, some sense of grasping onto branch on the side. Hopelessness is real discipline, real sense of renunciation of the flighty quality of hope and fear.

But that would not just in itself be enough, and the path continues with the development of compassion, which involves meditation in action, working in the world with others, involves communication with others. And this is the path of the bodhisattva, which is embodied in the bodhisattva vow, in which the practitioner vows to attain enlightenment, not for himself, but for the benefit of others.

And this is the development of fearlessness in terms of action. Fearlessness from the point of view of ego is some sense of conquering the territory for oneself. From the point of view of compassionate bodhisattva, [fearlessness] is giving more and more territory to others, which again is outrageous for ego, absolutely unthinkable. At least with hopelessness there's a sense of "I can be hopeless myself." But with the fearlessness of the bodhisattva's action, then even the hopelessness is given away.

But that hopelessness and fearlessness meet their culmination in the vajrayana, which is the complete merging of wisdom and compassion, wisdom and means, skillful means or compassionate action, together, and the ultimate accomplishment of allowing the mind to be as it is. So for those of you who are new to this particular path, I felt it was necessary to outline briefly the way, as it has been taught and transmitted.

The most important aspect of the experience of discipline, or practice, is that sense of being on the spot, being cornered, so to speak, and not pulling back, but actually leaning forward, leaning into the experience of practice. And on the outset, in the beginning, the most important thing is not to draw new conclusions, not to add further solidification, but to adopt an attitude of openness, so that whatever occurs in the realm of your mind can be seen clearly.

That is the basic protection, but that protection seems to need an awful lot of encouragement and training. If we continue to believe in our projections, then we continue the rounds of suffering and confusion which have brought us here. There is the possibility of cutting through that chain. We have to be patient. In terms of the practice, we have to be energetic. Those two are not at odds with each other. It is up to the practitioner, with the guidance of the teacher, to find his or her own way along the path. As much as can be is provided, but we personally have to make the journey, no one else can do it for us. I wish we had more time to go over these points, but if you continue to practice, I'm sure we can arrange another meeting [laughs].

If you have any questions, we could have a discussion.

QUESTION: I want to say in the beginning that I feel that compassion coming through tonight. My question is, the impartial observer, does it disappear, get transcended? Is that the first stage of enlightenment?

VAJRA REGENT: Well, the first stage is to realize that there is no impartial observer. That's called the discovery through the practice of sitting meditation of the transparent quality of this observer. This observer doesn't have any solid quality at all, in fact, it's questionable.

QUESTION: My question relates to timing or ripeness, and the question is, for someone like myself who feels on the verge of that hopelessness—despair, space, moment, very recently having lost a parent, grandparents, gone in the process of divorce, lost another loved one, and has left medical school [laughter], I'm in, I'm very, I'm teetering on that,

that space. And there are also phenomenal financial responsibilities, and I have a choice to make, a choice of or decision about doing something to resolve financial difficulties, which requires possibly trying to be success—trying to successfully make some money and take care of these responsibilities, which could very easily reinforce my ego.

VR: Hmm.

Q: [Laughs] I could do that, try to do that now and then resolve, sort of, those kind of difficulties...

VR: [Laughs] You know what I'm going to say.

Q: But I don't want to lose that moment, this, you know, from very close....

VR: Exactly. Don't. The point is, once you actually come into contact with that moment, you have some glimpse, then the forces of mara, or ego, start clamoring all over the place—past, present and future, my finances, my family, my this, my that, how could I possibly, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, on it goes. Those things will always be there, whether or not you attain enlightenment, there'll always be necessity to eat, sleep, have a roof, make money, family, care for other people. But when you have some sense of that moment, you should pursue.

Q: In terms of coming to, say, coming to Karme Chöling, would it be advisable to resolve—

VR: As much as you can, before you come. Yes, definitely. It's not...we shouldn't get too romantic about it in the sense of reading stories of suddenly, I left my, like, kingdom behind and, you know, marched off to the.... The parallels are the same. The experience is always the same with all of us. At some point, there is that sense of turning away from ego's territory is real renunciation, going toward the state of awake is real renunciation, but at the same time, we must take care of practical things of our world. But not to take too much time.

QUESTION: You mentioned that the discipline contains trickery, and I sort of think I caught perhaps what this trickery is on the level of hinayana. My question is what is this trickery on the mahayana level?

VR: Well, that you could actually help somebody else.

Q: You mean to believe in somebody else?

VR: No, to believe in helping somebody else.

Q: Believe in helping somebody else. Thank you.

VR: Which I suppose is the same thing as believing in somebody else.

Q: Yes.

QUESTION: Could you please speak some more about the fearlessness of the bodhisattva and hesitancy in leaping into things?

VR: Well, that point of, let's say, "I have accomplished some sense of sanity by sitting practice, actually feel much better. I don't feel as crazy as I did before. I can actually sit for a whole day without feeling like I have to jump off the roof or something like that, or get in the car and drive away very quickly." [Laughter] So you accomplished some sense of just being there with yourself, fine. But then, as you walk out of the shrine room and encounter the house manager or whatever, and says, "You didn't do this." you know, suddenly there's a sense of disturbing my space, my sense of tranquility, my sense of being sane, coming from outside. So it's necessary to go further than just sitting practice in terms of oneself, but actually meditation in action, walking around in the world, relating with other people, and a sense of giving up further territory. In other words, aggression, the aggression of having accomplished something also has to be seen as transparent, that accomplishment. So that aggression begins to dissolve, so you can actually talk with your house manager and think, "Well, okay," you know. [Laughs] Or whatever goes on. So it's a further step of letting go, or actually letting your mind be as it is.

QUESTION: Can you speak some more about feeling cornered by a situation?

VR: Well, in terms of ego's world, we always have a complete set of conclusions drawn about who we are and what life is, except for some little moments of uncertainty. Then we begin to practice meditation, and those moments become much larger and begin to reflect back on our supposed certainty of conceptual world. At that point, there is a possibility of going further or retreating back into conceptual mode and saying, "Well, everything is as I thought anyway, and this is just another little game, so I can go back to my apartment and put the plant food in, feed my cat, and do the things that I know are real to me." [Laughter] But in terms of actual experience of practice, there is a point when you are cornered, when the juxtaposition of that uncertainty and concept are face to face. It's a very small moment, happens all the time, happens continually, whether you're sitting or walking around, but it's much easier to recognize through sitting practice. That's what I meant by being cornered.

QUESTION: Is that kind of being cornered related to the gap that we're talking about yesterday that creates, causes the panic that makes the projection happen?

VR: Mm-hmm.

Q: And is that related to what's called the dharma of the leap, to learn the dharma of the leap? Would it be like when you see one of those many gaps coming, that instead of panicking and trying to bridge the gap, you would look on it as some kind of opportunity to, to make use of it, in some way to leap into it?

VR: That's right.

QUESTION: I wanted to ask you, you also were saying about the discovery of the transparent quality of the observer, and yesterday you were talking about discovering the transparent qualities of the mind—

VR: That's right.

Q: —of projections, and in what way are those related? Are they, it sounds like it might be the same, yet the observer isn't the same as—

VR: Well, the point there is that the observer is a reflection of what? That which is observed? Or does it go the other way around? Chicken and the egg. Which is real? Is the world real, or am I real? Are both real, or is there some unreality? This is what happens once you begin to look. Transparent quality of the mind is the same as transparent quality of ego, which effectively says that neither has any existence in relative sense.

Q: It's just that you can often work with a projection, and it seems to me that it's easier, say, to discover the transparency of that projection than to discover the transparency of the observer. Although it comes out of the observer, so it's related, right?

VR: Yes.

Q: I mean, it's—yes.

VR: Yes.

Q: One more question? You ended yesterday's talk by saying that shamatha practice was connected with, to pacify karma—

VR: Mm-hmm.

Q: —and I was wondering if it would be appropriate for you to describe the same kind of connection with the other karmas.

VR: Well, then, you have the, let's see, the magnetizing, enriching, destroying. Well, I think we outlined that in terms of the stages of the path. First, you have to create the ground, which is stable ground, so that the dust sort of settles. Then you have to sort of attract and enrich that ground, and then finally, cut through. Since we're talking about transparency, things appear to be solid. I appear to be solid, so does the world...

Q: Attracting and enriching go together.

VR: Well, they all go together, actually. It's just one movement. I don't think we should get too bogged down in that. It becomes very complicated.

QUESTION: Could you say something about the development of patience and self-friendship and the beginning points of a lot of confusion? Shamatha?

VR: Well, development of patience is allowing the thoughts to be as they are. That's the primary development of patience in shamatha practice. In other words, when you have instructions in the meditation practice, you're told, "Don't try and do anything with your

thought process, just come back to the breath.” Basically, we always try to either expand or detract from whatever we're thinking. We have certain thoughts which we consider to be valuable, certain ones we consider to be not so good. So that sets up a further identity of the one who thinks these thoughts are good, thinks these thoughts are bad, which creates conflict between the two. And that person, some form of person has to pick and choose, and then has to feel some remorse about discarding one and staying with the other. So the point of developing patience is allowing those thought processes to happen, but coming back to the technique. What was the other one?

Q: I was interested in how you can best be patient about making friends with yourself.

VR: Oh, well, that's beginning with simple situation of sitting practice. Then there's making relationship with the dharma and the sangha, in terms of developing some sort of basic sense of well being, which I think is what you're talking about. Some sense of compassion toward oneself, first. If you see the actual transparent quality of this idea of self, then compassion toward oneself automatically comes up, because there's a certain humor which is produced there, of thinking things to be so solid and so deadly, then actually realizing that from one moment to the next we have completely different self. Which has a little humor involved. [Laughs]

Q: Thank you.

QUESTION: You said that the sense of trick involved in mahayana is that we could actually help someone. My question is what is the sense of trick involved in vajrayana?

VR: Sense of trick. Well, the sense of trick is very simple, that you can actually allow the mind to be as it is. Which took you all that time to figure out. Which mind is as it is, anyway.

Q: My question is, still, what is the sense of trick in the hinayana?

VR: Didn't we go through that?

Q: Probably somewhere.

VR: Sense of trick in hinayana is protecting the mind through discipline. That you should actually find out what ego is all about.

Q: I also wanted to know, you said, somebody asked you, what does the initial insanity of ego come from? And you said that the insanity arose from the concept of sanity. If you have sanity, you have chaos.

VR: That's right. Not from the concept of sanity...

Q: From the sanity itself?

VR: Just, well, you wouldn't exactly call it sanity at that point. But from the precision and directness of experience.

Q: Does that mean that in order to experience basic sanity you are in some sense going beyond the dualism between sanity and chaos itself?

VR: Well, that takes quite some time. But, first, we have to, the whole trick is first to develop some sense of sanity and chaos. See what I mean? That you can actually distinguish between the two. In other words, you have knowledge of relative mind, how it works.

QUESTION: Would you please elaborate on the nature of and the method of relationship to the personal guru or teacher?

VR: Yes. The initial relationship with the teacher is through the actual discipline of sitting practice. Which is inspired by somebody. The Buddha, in this case, is the first idea of teacher, as someone who actually practiced, sat, achieved enlightenment. Further on, one has to have relationship with a teacher in terms of a friend, which is called kalyanamitra, spiritual friend. And that is working with the communicative factor of speech, body, speech. Body being the first, speech being the second, of exposing further the emotional quality of one's territorial thingy. And then lastly, absolute relationship with guru, which is in terms of mind. That the quality of mirror image and transmission of direct transmission, mind to mind. So those are the stages of relationship with the teacher.

QUESTION: You said that we have to develop some understanding of transparency of ego to develop any kind of sanity. And to deal with ourselves in a friendly way. And it seems that you're saying that in order to deal with others, we would have to develop the same sense of transparency.

VR: Right.

Q: And yet the world comes back and smacks us in the face.

VR: Mm-hmm.

Q: It seems that there's something lacking right at the beginning, when that happens. That there really isn't that really well-developed sense of transparency of self, to begin with.

VR: I don't quite understand the...are you talking about in terms of the hinayana practice, that...

Q: No, in terms of mahayana practice.

VR: Mahayana practice.

Q: That we make an attempt to go out.

VR: Oh, well, that actually world clapping you back is the sense of transparency. That in itself. That's the whole point. If you go out with a sense of getting back what you want, that sense of solidity, you go out, and it comes back the way it comes back.

QUESTION: Ösel, I find the situation of listening to the teachings a very powerful one in the sense that [it is] a difficult one. Because it creates an awful lot of uncertainty, and one is very much on the spot because one is trying to hear the teachings, and one recognizes

that the more one tries to hear, the less one hears, because the more chatter gets set up back and forth. So could you say a few words about a proper attitude for listening to the teachings?

VR: Well, basically, I think that some sense of respect and awe is necessary to begin with. Now, that's in early stages, just simple attraction, inquisitiveness, that there's something there. As it begins to confirm itself by your own experience, then you develop a sense of further attraction, which is some sense of awe at the truth of the teaching, the basic sense of actuality, true-ness, being true. Then, I suppose, that psychologically the best way to listen is as if you never heard it before [laughs]. Which is, I guess, some sense of giving up one's own territory. In terms of listening to the teaching, having respect and awe for the teaching means that the teaching takes its proper place, rather than the speaker or the listener being the important factor, the teaching is the important factor. So it sort of transcends the idea of ego entities on either side. That the teaching becomes the factor, that's the most important thing.

Q: Well, is there any sense of trick or technique?

VR: Well, I don't think so. Everybody has a different way of doing that. I myself never understood anything. [Laughter]

The back.

QUESTION: Does what you just explained about listening and teaching also relate to study? Because, for instance, today I had kind of a small problem, because the other day I had meditated all day, and I've done no study of this. And I felt something happen, and yet, later on in discussion, I was told that, it was explained to me that part of this is also study, and it kind of irked me because I felt I was also being told that nothing that I can do can be enhanced without the study. So I was just confused about projection and letting the mind be.

VR: Well, the point of study is that since we have this factor, or seem to have this factor of some kind of recognition, we would like some kind of recognition. Hmm? Somehow. Some feedback from our experience of our world that what we experience is so. The teachings that have been written down and explained are not meant as something that one should study in the sense of memorizing or trying to chew up a book or something like that. But rather, that intellect, that second aspect of mind is, and intuition, which we talked about, confirm each other. By that, we see the unity of the process of mind. Therefore, it's like the screwdriver we talked about the other day. Once you look at the object, then you realize that the object has parts, then you begin to think, "How did those parts get that way?" Then you begin to think, somehow, somebody put it together. Then you begin to see that there's a unity, there's a process of mind which is happening all the time, which includes those aspects. So study is not meant as some sort of filler, adjunct, you know, some sort of little thing on the side. But actually, it's part of the practice itself,

working on that level of intellectual mind as a sense of confirmation of what already exists, rather than adding something new.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

VR: Hmm. [Laughs]

QUESTION: Speaking of study, I had some questions about what you said in your first two talks. First of all, what's the relationship between the five skandhas and the three aspects of mind?

VR: Five skandhas are the emotional and intellectual fog which covers up the three aspects of mind.

Q: But, at the same time, the three aspects of mind in some sense maintain the solidity of the skandhas? In other words, you know, one's intellect is used improperly, or something like that?

VR: No, I don't think that [the three] aspects maintain anything at all.

Q: Well, who does ego's thinking?

VR: Good question. [Laughter] Nobody.

Q: Okay. I have another question. When you talked about rikpa, it seems that it's somewhat enlightened quality, sense of totality, sense of overview of the situation, sort of uninvolved slightly, or something like that.

VR: No, I don't think so. I don't think that it has anything to do with enlightened particularly, or unenlightened. It's just a kind of container of the others. It's a simultaneous process in any case, like we were talking about, of the screwdriver.

Q: Well, what is it that sees the three aspects of mind...

VR: [Laughing] Three aspects of mind.

Q: In other words, rikpa sees rikpa, and lodrö sees lodrö, or—

VR: Sure.

Q: So in the skandhas—also, a question that came up in our discussion group was—

VR: Aha!

Q: —the skandhas, they're inherently neurotic, I guess.

VR: As skandhas, yes.

Q: In other words, there's some issue about “Don't you need the concept of door to walk through it,” et cetera.

VR: [Laughing] It's more complicated than that. Then you have the concept of “walk” and “through.” Space in between. See, that's the point, that we're always dealing with surface of

that fifth skandha level we talked about. Which is simply a matter of top layer. And then maybe concept. But then, when we actually start penetrating, there's more to it than just simply, "You need the concept of door in order to walk through."

QUESTION: My question is about decision making. If the mind is just its three functions like you described, is the basis of decision making always appropriateness?

VR: No.

Q: Without ego reference point?

VR: Spontaneous, yes.

Q: Spontaneous appropriateness. So then, are ends and means always the same thing in Buddhism?

VR: When you say Buddhism [laughing]...

Q: In life?

VR: Are ends and means always the same thing? That's a very complicated question. We have appearance, whatever. We have ends and means that appear to be different, seem the same. We have duality, which is neurotic sense of myself and other, and then we have duality, which is myself and other. [Laughs] The point is, I don't think we can actually, at this time, get too deeply into that idea. But there is a sense of process, and sense of ongoing continuity, sense of continuity of mind, which is always happening. And means and end are that continuity.

Back, behind you, Peter.

QUESTION: At level of mahayana practice, but also throughout all of the levels, it's been suggested to me that one needs a sense of surrender, but also a sense of discriminating awareness. Especially with regards to the slap in the face, but actually, all the time. How, if we're so lost in ego, so deceived, and also if, how are we to maintain discriminatory awareness if we're as bad off as...

VR: Well, basically, the only way to do that is to begin to see the transparent quality of ego. Which in itself gives rise to discriminating awareness. Discriminating awareness is the ability to cut through any ego manifestation as it arises.

Q: So it's really not possible to do that from the beginning, it's only after you change your perspective or something.

VR: Here we go, at the beginning and end. I think definitely perspective has to change.

Q: So someone coming to the practice really can't be that discriminating. Or coming to any new practice, it's very difficult, might be very difficult for one to know what's...

VR: If you stick around long enough, you begin to see a pattern evolving. That happens with every student. Everybody squawks in a different way, of course. You know, high pitch,

low pitch, more sustained, shorter, staccato. [Laughter] But basically, there's no way you can avoid the process, actually coming into contact with that sense of panic.

Q: Thank you.

QUESTION: The bodhisattva can't help anybody, or rather, it's a mistake to think that you can help anybody—

VR: I didn't say that.

Q: No? Wasn't that the trick? That you can help somebody? Or the idea that you can help somebody?

VR: That's the basic trick. But you have to understand what “trick” is.

Q: But you said that the bodhisattva functions by communicating and creating space.

VR: That's right. Helping other people. Toward practice.

Q: But does that mean that other people automatically know what to do with the space that the bodhisattva creates?

VR: Automatically?

Q: Well, I don't know, but, I mean....

VR: Well, it's the same thing as coming here. You're taught how to practice meditation, you don't automatically think that you know how to do it, you know. It's a matter of going along. Continuing. Perseverance.

Q: Yes, but what's...you see, what I don't understand is that if the space is created for me—

VR: Oh, I didn't say anything about space being created for you.

Q: Well, I don't...

VR: As an ego entity, as somebody out... bodhisattva doesn't create a space for you, Peter, as such. But by continually giving up his own space, he creates space for others.

Q: Yes, but I don't understand how they know what to do in it, in the space.

VR: How who knows what to do?

Q: The others.

VR: Well, it's very simple. Somebody tells you how to meditate, and you begin to try it. You think you don't know what to do, and then you think you do, and then you think you don't... Then you start to relax a little bit and become more inquisitive, and you study and... [sighs] How you know what to do is the fact that your mind actually is a mind, and intelligent, you know. Mind is intelligence. That's how you know what to do. If that's what you're talking about.

Q: I thought I knew.

VR: [Laughs] So.

QUESTION: This may seem like a silly question, but I was wondering what you would think of a world composed of all bodhisattvas?

VR: What do I think of that world?

Q: Is it possible?

VR: Yes, certainly.

Q: And what would it be like? Can you imagine what it would be like?

VR: Yes. Splendid. [Laughter]

Q: I don't understand what "splendid" is, what?

VR: Well, whatever you think of as splendid. Sense of generosity, patience, energy, discipline, meditation, knowledge. It's what the world would be like.

QUESTION: Would you define again the term "relative mind?"

VR: Relative means that which recognizes object as separate from the subject.

Q: So then that's the state of mind that one would seek to have.

VR: But that's what seems to be happening. I don't know if one would seek to have that, particularly. That's where we find ourselves when we begin practice. In other words, when you practice, there's a sense of you, and there's a sense of the practice as being separate. The whole idea of practicing along the path is those two things come together. Okay?

QUESTION: Could you say something further about what you meant in terms of an attitude towards yourself when you said in beginning to get into practice not to try to draw on new conclusions and make more solidifications out of those?

VR: Yes. The idea that, "Ah, now I understand, now I got it." Just let go of that. You have to let go of that as well. You have to let go of that understanding commentator in the sitting practice, especially.

Q: You mean you shouldn't be involved in trying to understand, say, the meaning of what you're experiencing. Is that what you mean?

VR: Well, it's not that you shouldn't be involved in it, you're going to be involved in it anyway. It's going to come up. The point is to let that dissolve, go back to the breath.

Q: And outside of sitting practice as an attitude toward yourself?

VR: Well, I think that the simpler, the better.

Q: Do you mean just simply to refrain from, just not make any conclusions, "I am this, I am that?"

VR: Something like that. Yes. Or the point there is refrain from stopping at one particular one. [Laughter] It's a sense of a continual flip-flop, always happens. What happens with impermanence is when we get stuck in believing something is permanent, some particular attitude, some particular state of mind. We say, "This is what I am," and then we start to develop all the mind of fortifications, which we call ego. Which we don't allow anybody to penetrate. That's simply because we got stuck in a particular concept, thought, particular momentary experience.

Q: Thanks.

VR: Okay. That's it. Better be good. Okay. [Inaudible words]

QUESTION: Intuition, intuition.

VR: Yes.

Q: Intuition. Can you set it up again, in your understanding?

VR: Intuition? What is it?

Q: Yes, it's inspiration, it's actualization in life...

VR: No, intuition is basically the sense of totality of the environment, space that we exist in.

Q: A deep feeling of true-ness?

VR: No. Just a feeling of is-ness.

Q: Oh, truth, something like that...

VR: No, truth is part of untruth, you know. Truth is part of lie. But intuition is just basic sense of feeling of environment.

Well, [the] environment we have created here at Karne-Chöling is very powerful one and extremely beneficial for sentient beings. And beneficial for practitioners of all kinds. I trust that you make use of it, and continue on your own journey. This particular path called the buddhadharma is very uncompromising one. But it's also very kind and a compassionate one. It doesn't allow for your frivolousness, but it's generous enough to take the time to have that frivolousness dissolve and become transparent. If you make a commitment to practice, you should do so with whole-hearted effort. There are many different things to do in our life, as human beings, there's a whole variety show of entertainment we could get into. But sooner or later, the same question pops up. Whether it's when you're lying in the hospital bed about to die with intravenous and lung machine and everything else, or whether it's the day you get married or divorced. Or so many other things, so many other times, some little question pops up. That is the inspiration of the buddhadharma, that's the appearance of buddha nature in our life, in our experience. You should recognize that and nurture it. Practice and become enlightened. So thank you very much.