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Naropa Institute Course: Naropa, the Mahasiddha
Talk 2 of 3
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VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN:

Ladies and gentlemen, we will continue with our discussion of the mahasiddha, Naropa, and his life example. Last night we were discussing his early years and how his keenness for learning and passion to find out caused him to meet many teachers and scholars and caused him to become learned in the five branches of learning at the time, and beyond that to have a personal experience of the truth of existence, that in this case, being his understanding of the transitoriness of the human existence, its conditioned quality and also the suffering that goes along with attaching oneself to anything which is conditioned.

So Naropa had these experiences as personal experience, not just something he read about or something that he studied, with his own experience. And that coupled with his keen mind made him a great student. As we look at his life until his twenties, we see how much vast learning was involved. Any of you who are students of buddhadharma or Buddhist studies program here realize how many aspects of dharma can be studied. Traditionally, they say there are 84,000 dharmas, but that's just simply a number, attached to mean there are a great number of dharmas. And if you read Naropa's biography, you realize that he studied probably everything that was available at the time, which is volumes upon volumes. And he was learned and accomplished in both the sutrayana and the tantrayana as well. So he understood the very basic teachings to the most complicated and esoteric teachings. He understood. And he practiced them as well.

You have to realize that when we talk about Naropa as a scholar, the word, I suppose, is slightly different in the ancient Indian. When we talk about a pandit, or pandita, it's slightly different than what we understand as scholar. Not entirely different, but slightly different. At that particular time to be learned, pandita, like Naropa, not only meant that one was well versed in the written or verbal dharma, but also well versed in the technical aspects of the practice. For instance, if Naropa understood, as it says in some biographies, the Kalachakra tantra or Guhyasamaja tantra, whatnot, that must have meant

at the same time that he understood the practices involved with it, because they were inseparable. So the degree of sophistication that we're talking about in Naropa's learning is enormous. When he finally becomes the abbot of Nalanda University, he's renowned throughout India as the greatest pandita of the time.

Nalanda, of course, is the model university, a Buddhist university in the Mahayana tradition, inasmuch as what was taught there was not, was not in a dogmatic reference. The great thing about Nalanda University was the fact that it was an open door, so to speak, for learning at that time in India. So many different scholars, not only Buddhist scholars, but Hindu scholars, and practitioners of the time would come to Nalanda to debate and to study. So that was the seat of learning.

And it is that model that Naropa Institute is based on. In fact, in 1974, in the first year we opened, we had a gentleman called Ram Dass come here, and several other people of different traditions. And it was kind of an explosion. And Rinpoche's point of view, Trungpa Rinpoche's point of view, is that kind of meeting is excellent and good because it can create in the mind of the student a notion of further possibilities and further awakening, without becoming allied with a certain camp. Let's say I'm from the Buddhist side, and people say, well, I'm from the Hindu side, you know, and well, that did happen invariably. But beyond that what actually was a powerful thing about it was that people began to question and were inquisitive into the actual nature of their experience, no matter who was presenting one thing or another. And that has been our position, so to speak. So in some ways we have been criticized for allowing so-called crazy people to teach here. Or we have been criticized sometimes for being crazy ourselves and, well, allowing sane people to teach here. But in any case, it's the same. The atmosphere, the atmosphere is powerful. And because of the power, and the power is brought about because of the heritage and the tradition of Naropa and the Buddhist lineage of the time.

In any case, Naropa himself became abbot of Nalanda University. And I think for eight years he—or was it twelve? I don't remember now, it doesn't matter, eight, twelve, six—for a long, for eight or twelve years he was abbot of Nalanda University. And the greatest abbot, according to the text. When he presented the teachings, they were not only understood intellectually, but people felt them intuitively. So he was considered to be the best of his time. And as the story goes, he was studying some books on epistemology and logic one day on his veranda, and a shadow was cast over him from behind, and he turned around to see this old ugly hag. Who is said to have thirty-seven ugly features, among which were a big, protruding, pus-filled nose, and teeth that were turned inward, and all kinds of things like that are described. And she's leaning on a staff. And she said to him, "What are you doing?" and he said, "Well, I'm studying my books here, logic, epistemology, and whatnot. And then the famous "Do you understand the words or the sense?" she asked him. And he said, "Well, I understand the words." And she begins to laugh hysterically. And thinking that he had pleased her, he said, "I also understand the sense, the sense." And she begins to cry and weep and moan. And Naropa, being that kind of person, said, "How is it that when I first said this you laughed, and when I said

this, you began to cry?" She said, "Because I thought you were an honest person, but you lied. You said you understood the sense as well as the words, and that's not actually true." At that point a kind of opening occurred in Naropa's mind, and he realized that all of his learning and all of his accumulation of knowledge had not liberated him from self-consciousness and egotism. So at that point he said, "How can I learn the sense?" And she said, "Well, my brother will tell you all about it, just go find him." Her brother in that case being Tilopa. The important point about the story is that although Naropa was so renowned and learned, still intuitively, when it came down to it, he was honest with himself. If he did not really understand it, he was honest with himself. Even if he was a little puffed up and probably exaggerated the experience, still when it came right down to it, he understood that without true unification of one's intellect and intuition, if there's not one unified field of experience, then we are still kidding ourselves and making a dualistic split in terms of reality.

So that experience at that time was very powerful for him. At first, he sat back and began to analyze all the thirty-seven ugly features, because he was trained in that way, and he thought, "I must go find this person, who she called her brother." Now according to the tradition, that old hag was actually Tilopa's manifestation as the Vajradakini. Vajradakini is, in this case, being the messenger of the guru. And also the ugly features were his own defilements from past lives, and also his pretension in the present life. So what he saw was actually his own projection in some ways. If he had no obscuration in his mind, the person he would have seen would have been Tilopa himself.

In the same way, we should think about our own learning experience and our own identity as a student. When we call ourselves students, we should remember that there is always the possibility that we are projecting on this canvas, which we call the world, our own interpretation and our own self-consciousness. So we should be careful about that so that we don't amass facts and so-called knowledge simply for the benefit of reassuring ourselves about who we are and what we're doing.

In that way, Naropa's example is very powerful, because he was not pretentious. He had some problems, shall we say. Maybe his problems were a lot bigger than ours because he was such a smart guy. But in any case, his problems were immediate to his mind. And when he saw this particular vision, it woke him up. Frightened him in some ways and woke him up. And he thought to himself, "I should find out what's really true." So he told his brother monks in Nalanda and the different gatekeepers and the 500 scholars and all that, that he was leaving. And they protested in different forms and petitioned him, saying, "If you leave the sangha, then the noble doctrine will go down." And "What better friends can you have than these?" and "How and what better way can you learn or continue your brilliance than being here? Why are you going away?" In each case he said, he rejected their pleas, and he said, "Just say it must be this way, I have to go." And he left. So we have that particular story. It's a great story, in some ways.

Until we are completely free from clinging to what we call our knowledge, we don't really understand anything at all. So Naropa himself set out to find his guru, Tilopa.

Tilopa had already studied and accomplished all that there was to accomplish and had become an enlightened being, and at that time was said to be living on the banks of a river, eating fish entrails that were thrown away by the local fishermen. It was a rather unrespectable type of life, especially from Naropa's point of view, being born into a princely family and being an abbot and a monk and all the rest of it. Tilopa himself was somewhat of a scoundrel, you might say, or seemingly, to the outside world. This is one of the different qualities of what's called a siddha, one who has accomplished all that there is to accomplish. They lived in various ways and different forms. Some were kings, some merchants, some beggars.

In any case, Naropa went to look for him. And in his looking for him he encountered obstacles. And the obstacles came in the form of visions of everything that was somewhat, you might say, disgusting to him. And seemingly contrary to all the things that he had learned. For instance, he had a particular vision of a man who was about to kill his parents, and this man said to him. But first he would ask, "Do you know where Tilopa is?" And the man said, "Yes, I do, but first help me kill my parents, and then I will show you where Tilopa is." And he thought, "I can't do that because it goes against everything I have ever learned." And suddenly, the whole vision would disappear, and he would faint. And then he would wake up again and think to himself, "There must something in that," you know. And then he would go on, and one vision followed another. And in each of those particular visions, or obstacles, you could say, he was confronted with his own projection, or his own view of things. Tilopa, himself, was testing his student to see if he actually was so puffed up that he was incapable of letting go of that clinging to his accumulated knowledge. Well, anyway, eventually he got despondent, after not finding Tilopa and having all those visions. And he thought, "Well, this is useless, I might as well commit suicide. If I can't find a guru who can teach me the complete teachings, there is no point in me being alive." At that point, Tilopa appeared to him. First, he heard a voice saying, "If you kill the Buddha, how do you expect to ever attain enlightenment?" Which meant to say, if you ruin this particular chance in your lifetime by destroying this body, then enlightenment will be impossible to attain in the future. And then Tilopa appeared to him in the flesh, so to speak.

So he began his studies with Tilopa, which lasted for twelve years. And those twelve years are very famous in the Kagyü lineage, because in those twelve years, he received twelve different instructions, which make up the body of the doctrine which he handed down to his successors, which makes up the body of the doctrine and practice of the Kagyü lineage. But the interesting part about the twelve years is his relationship with Tilopa, in fact, the student-teacher relationship altogether. And how that played such an important part in his eventual realization, and how it has played such an important part in the history of our particular lineage, and also in the way we here think about the student-teacher relationship. Basically, at that time, and in Naropa's mind, that relationship is considered to be sacred. Sacred, pure, and well, you could say, something that one would never violate, that relationship between student and teacher, teacher and

student, guru and disciple. It's the same thing. In ancient times, that kind of relationship was very much a way of life, even in the Western world, in ancient Greece and Rome, and the student-teacher relationship was a sacred relationship. Learning was a sacred act. And the whole notion of studying under a teacher for a period of time was part of one's life. Well, one who did that anyway. If you were fortunate enough. In terms of Naropa, Tilopa was incarnate buddhahood, and therefore, he could devote himself for twelve years to his teacher, knowing that his teacher was in reality the Buddha himself.

If you read about the kinds of experiences he had over those twelve years and what Tilopa actually put him through to test his dedication, you might think that Naropa was actually quite stupid and just simply ignorant. But that is not actually the case. Naropa was so, you might say, deliberately stupid in a foxy way, intelligent way. He realized that the whole repository of enlightenment existed in this person. And therefore he should devote his body, speech and mind, and whatever occurred during that experience was the opportunity to wake up. Whichever way was presented.

Sometimes, Tilopa presented the most outrageous things to Naropa. For instance, in one particular experience, he took Naropa to the top of a temple roof, and he said to him, "If I had a student, he probably would have jumped off by this time." And Naropa thought to himself, "That must mean me." And so he jumped off. Another time they were crossing a pool full of leeches, and Tilopa said, "If I had a student, he probably would lie down and let me walk over him." And Naropa thought to himself, "Well, that must mean me." And this happened periodically over twelve years, and each time that happened there would be a further opening in Naropa's mind, and then therefore, Tilopa would impart to him another one of the teachings that he had. Because what happened was, is that Naropa, out of devotion and out of ignorance both, you could say, out of intelligence and ignorance at the same time, gave up his body, his mind, and his speech to the moment, to the actual moment. In other words, he let go of his fear altogether, and therefore he became worthy to receive the kinds of teachings he did.

So those of you who think about these things and have questions about them should understand that the relationship between the two was the most important thing that was happening. Even more so than the teachings in some ways. Because the teachings couldn't be imparted unless that bond between the student and the teacher was made complete. And that, the reason that actually worked is because Naropa himself had already realized the transparency of ego, and therefore he understood to some degree that the relationship was not based on materialism of any kind. And he was not actually doing this in order to advance himself, but he was doing it simply for the sake of enlightenment itself. And in that case, his body was useful. There was no particular fame that he needed more than he had already achieved when he was abbot of Nalanda. There was nowhere further that he could go in terms of the worldly pursuits. But in terms of actual realization and knowledge, he had to give up every last bit of his pretension and habitual thinking. So in that way Naropa, you could say, is the foremost student, ideal. In fact, Tilopa says

several times, "You are a worthy vessel, immaculate, resplendent." So I don't know if that means anything to anybody.

Naropa eventually did reach his goal. After twelve years, he was completely initiated in all the yogas of mahamudra and all the different practices that Tilopa had received. And he mastered all of them. He had obviously a very strong mind and perseverance. But most of all, I would say he had a very solid understanding of discipline. That's why he could have devotion, because discipline and devotion are practically the same thing. So that's the story up to this point. If you have any questions, we could have a discussion.

QUESTION: Sir, I wanted to ask about your statement that Naropa was stupid in a foxy kind of way. I find myself surprised at that, because what do you mean by stupid?

VAJRA REGENT: Well, there's a certain quality about ignorance which furthers one's devotion, and that quality is kind of lack of ambition on a personal level. It is not a lack of intelligence, particularly, but it's the lack of drive to prove to oneself that "I am what I am", that kind of thing. In that case, in that way, Naropa was somewhat stupid. You might even say ignorant or dumb from conventional standards. The conventional person would say, "This is ridiculous, first of all, you can't prove that this fellow ever achieved anything at all. And to go through twelve years with a raggedy bum just wandering around, getting beat up, seems very stupid. And from the ordinary point of view, it is. That's why I say he was dumb, but from a cagey point of view. He knew that wish-fulfilling gem, the enlightenment itself, was embodied in the guru. What he had to do was follow the instructions.

Q: The thing that surprises me about how you put it is that I always was stuck in the stories is jumping off the temple and lying down in the leeches and the other things, at how he actually was willing to drop his arrogance from the past in terms of his accomplishments and his willingness to be completely literal.

VR: That's what people call stupid.

Q: I see...

VR: You know?

Q: And so where does the foxy part come from?

VR: Well, because he knew that by that stupidity and literalness he could achieve his goal.

Q: So the foxy part is the devotion.

VR: Yes, that's the intelligent part. The intelligent part is the devotion. The devotion, by the way, is the further unfolding of the passion we talked about last night. His passion for learning became devotion to Tilopa, which is the same thing, except that it became very one pointed. It became just a... instead of being a whole network of streets and roads and what not, it just became a super highway, direct, express lane.

Q: Thank you.

VR: Gentleman in the back, all the way in the back.

QUESTION: Sir, last night you talked about certain sloppiness here at Naropa, and how that was inherited from the lineage going back to Naropa. And that by that sloppiness, if I remember what you said correctly, it created gaps and space wherein learning could happen. And then in the following talk when you talked about that part of Naropa's life I didn't see any sloppiness at all and I thought well then maybe in the later part of his life, he was so strict at first, maybe he loosened up...

VR: He certainly did.

Q: Well, it seems that in working with Tilopa it was very immaculate.

VR: Immaculate, but conventionally sloppy. In the same way, we have immaculate Naropa Institute, conventionally... You see, as I said last night, it was very important for Naropa to do what he did in the beginning part of his life, to accumulate all of that knowledge, simply from the point of view of when that contrast came. He woke up, because he had amassed all of this knowledge, and when the naked truth was in front of his eyes, everything else melted away. So he could, being intelligent, he could make the distinction between what is actually true and what is simply accumulated habit. so he loosened up quite a bit actually. I suppose he just sat there and ate the fish entrails with his friend too, you know.

Q: Yes, thanks.

VR: You're welcome. It's important that you realize that the tantra, or the vajrayana people don't look like your ordinary Joes, so to speak. No offense. They seem to be unconventional, from the ordinary point of view, or the ordinary in this case is from the habitual mind, from the point of view of habitual mind. They seem to be unpredictable, without any kind of morality, crazy, fearless, at the same time, powerful and wise. All those things involved.

QUESTION: If Naropa was supposed to be a great teacher, why did he lie to please the old lady?

VR: Well, he just thought that if he said one thing, and she laughed and felt, happy, if he said the next thing, she would be happier. He didn't realize that he was deceiving himself at the time. That was the point. He didn't realize that he was lying to himself. He didn't actually lie deliberately. He didn't really know. That's why the old, lady, or the old hag came to point it out to him, that he was actually deceiving himself. You see the old lady is actually his teacher, in a different form. Does that make sense?

QUESTION: I'm sort of confused about the relationship between Naropa and Tilopa because on the one hand you say that Naropa sees the old woman, and she is actually a projection of him. But on the other hand, the old lady is the messenger from Tilopa. And all the visions that he has on his way, on his journey to Tilopa are presumably that...

VR: They're all Tilopa. Yes.

Q: They're all Tilopa, but are they also all projections of him as well?

VR: They're all projections of his mind at the same time.

Q: Okay, so how, you know, how do we relate back to our projections as we have them in the world, you know. To what extent do we see things as real? Are they real, and to what extent are they just our projections, is what I'm asking.

VR: Well, I think you have to be very clear about that for yourself. But to have a projection is not necessarily bad. In fact, mind projects continually. It projects itself onto space. And that very act of projecting itself onto space creates the image of an external reality or an object. The difference between seeing that clearly and not is that the object takes on a life of its own, and is always in contradistinction to the subject. There's always a split between the two. As long as there's a split between the two, one can be pretty well sure that we are laying a trip on things.

QUESTION: Was Naropa aware that the old lady to begin with was his projection, or did he...

VR: No. He was not aware, that's why...he was aware to a degree, yes. To a degree he was aware because he said to, he thought to himself there must be something more to this than meets my particular vision, you know. Therefore, he went out to seek Tilopa. He didn't know to what extent that was true, to what extent he was actually projecting the whole thing. But he did know in his, you know, basic sane mind, which we all know in our basic sane mind, that when we lay a trip on reality, and when we project on reality, it is our trip, and reality itself is not particularly bothered by it, but we are. He was bothered by the old hag because it was his trip, it was his projection. So he had to find out about his projection, and in order to do that, he had to meet Tilopa, he had to meet a teacher, someone who could teach him about how to find out.

Q: Thank you.

QUESTION: You said to achieve enlightenment you had to let go of all your wisdom or thoughts...

VR: Well, habitual thoughts or accumulated thoughts, yes.

Q: And the illusions were to try and let, to make him let go of those thoughts?

VR: That's right. They were his own illusions but at the same time his teacher was trying to wake him up. So sometimes he would appear to him in very outrageous forms, things that would not normally be considered to be, what's another word for kosher? You know, a legitimate way of teaching, or appropriate way of teaching. It would be outrageous in order to wake him up. It's like the old story of banging your head against the wall, you know, that kind of thing. And that's why that happened that way.

QUESTION: Sir, we're talking about Naropa's example as student, in a situation where he sees the ground of his relationship with Tilopa is that he see Tilopa as Buddha incarnate. (Inaudible) I'm wondering what kind of analogy you can draw to the situation at Naropa Institute with students and teachers, where the student doesn't necessarily see the teacher as Buddha incarnate, what example...

VR: To the degree that you see your teacher as the repository of knowledge, and, in a pure sense, in that way you should venerate your teachers and respect them, and try to learn from them in terms of body, speech and mind. The same kind of relationship exists on all levels. It depends on what you really want to achieve.

Q: There is some ultimate quality of trust in it that seems to make an enormous difference.

VR: Have you ever noticed how some teachers and students get along really well? If they're not deceiving each other, it's because there's an enormous amount of trust on a very basic level, very fundamental level. And there's absence of egotism. There's a certain kind of joy involved in the relationship, a certain kind of rapport. Also, there's a lot of difficulty.

Q: Thank you.

QUESTION: I have a question about the express highway that you mentioned, and about how that was funneling his passions for knowledge, but last night I thought you were saying that it's important to begin my mastering a form, any sort of form? And sometime I wonder how one is supposed to apply one's efforts, whether it's important to first of all acquire the sort of knowledge or worldly understanding that Naropa had, in order to then give it up, or whether it's important just to practice, to take advantage of having a teacher or teachings around.

VR: Depending on the stage of one's development. The first things are the rudimentary things, important things are to learn the forms. For instance, if you are given a practical thing, you know, assignment, you know. If you have to research this particular thing or other, if you have the skills, know how to do the research, where to find the material, and what not, that part is the ground and it's taken care of. Beyond that, we have to go into the truth of the matter. So it is important to know how to do things to begin with. In the say way we were taught by our parents how to eat and go to the potty, things like that.

Q: But often there is at the beginning confusion about how even to begin or what to study or what to master. Isn't it important to lay some kind of groundwork in—

VR: Well, nobody can actually tell you how to do that. I mean, in terms of our mutual association here, we're talking about learning from the point of view of well, pretty much the same classical point of view as anybody would learn, you know. How to train you mind so that it is inquisitive and sharp and discriminating and able to delve into particular topics and to distinguish one from the other and produce some kind of work from that, you know. I mean those are pretty basic things. What you should look for or what you should go into?

Q: I guess I'm still just asking whether you're talking about the form being meditation form, or the form being academic form, or does that matter?

VR: Oh, well, it's both, in a sense, you know. I mean the academic pursuit, when done solely for its own purposes is simply one-sided. The intuitive pursuit, when done solely for its own purposes is also one-sided. When the two are brought together in direct path,

direct highway, then you have what Naropa Institute puts in all its literature, the merging of intellect and intuition, which is synchronizing mind and body and becoming a completely educated person. So, meditation takes care of your baby quality, you know the part in us that's always a baby. (VR imitates a baby whining.) Meditation takes care of that. And intellect takes care of your brat quality. The baby is helpless, the brat is always thinking about ways to be more bratty. So those two things are taken care of by study and practice. Eventually, what they do is they dissolve into each other, and burn out any particular root of reoccurrence. At that point real wisdom is attained.

Q: Thank you very much.

QUESTION: I wonder if you could say a little more about how devotion and discipline are practically the same thing?

VR: Devotion is the most intelligent form of discipline. Discipline, in its early stages is the rules and regulations. In its middle stage, it's the flexibility of one's mind. In other words, it's the absence of fear about one's mind. In the final stage it's giving up one's mind altogether. I could say a lot about it. Do you have anything in particular?

Q: Well, one thing is the sort of conventional idea of discipline, is that there's some kind of effort involved.

VR: Yes, of course.

Q: And some how I think of devotion as having somewhat more of an automatic quality.

VR: Not as far as I know. And I'm supposed to be the expert around here. From this person's point of view, it takes effort. In fact, much more so. At a certain point again, that effort is not separate from one's own being. It is still effort in, but you might say, in the total sense. Like all the cells of your body are making the same effort at the same time. It's that kind of effort. The synchronized quality. Discipline always takes effort. In the beginning the effort is self-conscious, because you feel separate from the knowledge. And you discipline yourself in order to attain that knowledge. In the middle, the effort, is, you might say, not metaphysical, it's almost yes, metaphysical or philosophical effort in the middle part, you know. Because after you get over the first notion of effort of having to always do it on the spot, you relax that and then you begin to feel that effort is spontaneous and comes and goes. And you can let it happen that way. In the last part, it's like a dart and a bull's eye.

QUESTION: Sir, I had always heard that story, but I had never really, I guess it never really struck me about when he said he knew the words, the hag laughed, and then when he said he knew the sense, the hag cried it, seems like that was right there on the spot, his whole journey, as far as we all conventionally understand words, so to speak. And, you know, we experience them ourselves, or we know conventionally what it means. But that when you're talking about when it's brought full circle or nondualistically to completion of

some kind, that there's total experience there, so he would realize right there on the spot that hag was enlightened being or whatever, through the crying...

VR: It was his own mind, which is enlightened being, yes? He would have if he didn't have habitual thoughts.

Q: So, the whole twelve years was to break habitual thoughts...

VR: That's it. That's all we're doing here... You see, this whole accumulation of knowledge is a joke, you know. But it's a good joke. See, there are bad jokes and there are good jokes. This one is a good joke because it's the kind of joke that eventually unravels itself and leads to real humor and not just the "ha, ha, ha" kind. So, you know, our pursuits, if we have the right intention and if along the way we meet the right teachers, it's good to do. Certainly, in that very moment he could have realized everything.

Q: So when—

VR: Same with ourselves when the toast burns.

Q: See that's, you know, I guess I don't understand that part. I mean, that's probably what I was trying to get to is that I had heard this a lot, right, but I mean, I've never, you know, but I still don't, in other words, you have to go through it—

VR: Yes, you really do—

Q: There's no escaping it which—

VR: No, no—

Q: It seems like—

VR: Why would you want to?

Q: Well, I don't know

VR: Oh, I know why, because it's painful. That's why. Now I remember. Yes, you have to go through the journey. Maybe you don't. You know, right on the spot, right now you could say, this is it. But if habit starts to creep in you forget this is it. And you say, this is this, and this is that, this is that, this is this, I like this, I don't like that, I like you, I don't like you. How busy we get. We get real busy about those things. The sense, it's taught, that enlightenment can be achieved in this very moment because there's nobody to achieve it and nothing to achieve. Therefore, here it is. It's also that because of habitual thinking that very basic experience is obscured. And therefore, hundreds, or even thousands of techniques are prescribed in order for individuals like ourselves to clear away the obscurations. But, you know, Naropa's life is very important in that way, because you see someone who was really a super duper at what he did, fantastic. And yet, he still was clinging to habitual thinking. And he understood that, in the same way we do. He just had very good discipline, you see.

Q: Thank you.

QUESTION: Sir, would you mind please talking a little more about intuition and the analogy you drew. It seems to me that habit of thought, that how Naropa realized that he had that was through intuition which I realize has something to do with what we call the heart. That the true teacher ultimately is your own heart That the master is your heart

and that the only way that he could learn from Tilopa was because each time Tilopa told him to do something although it seemed foolish and stupid to his head, his heart he knew to be true. Is this...

VR: He actually loved Tilopa.

Q: So how does the relationship to master relate to the relationship to one's own heart and intuition?

VR: It has to be the same. If it's not the same we don't learn anything. All we do is accumulate facts.

Q: So, we have to have a master so that we can relate to our heart?

VR: Yes, yes teacher is your own heart. And in the final stages, the one important thing is to give your heart to something. That's, you see, that's what we always do, human beings always do. We do it in little ways. We do it for our doggie, or our, you know, bank manager, and you know, anything, any little thing, you know. Our new sports jacket, or sport coat, you know, we give our heart to that, you know. That's what we do constantly, our business. Our, you know, our children, everything. But the final stage of our life is when we give it completely to our teacher.

Q: How does one know when one's found one's teacher?

VR: I think it's obvious. It's obvious. You can't stop thinking about them. It's sort of like being haunted. Scary and good. But haunted, nonetheless.

Q: When did Naropa start teaching again?

VR: We come to that tomorrow. Well, after the twelve years with Tilopa he was instructed by Tilopa to go out and teach. And I think he must have been in his late 30s at the time, 38 or something like that. Somewhat around my age, I think, 39, 38, 40, somewhere in there. Tilopa said, "You have completed, understood everything that I have to teach you, so now go out and teach other people." We're going to talk about that tomorrow, actually.

Q: Why didn't he tell that student's why he wanted to leave?

VR: Why didn't he tell them? He was at that point to, well, he didn't actually know. All he knew was that he wasn't, he wasn't satisfied with what he knew, with what he could achieve. And he knew that the only freedom for him would be to go.

Q: He knew that he had to learn more though.

VR: Yes. You mean why didn't he tell them that?

Q: Yes.

VR: He probably did, but basically all he said was, in essence was, "It has to be this way." Even if he told them, "I have to learn more." they would say, "That's impossible, you know everything already, you're the number one, top scholar, pandita, in all of India, in that case all of the world at that time. And "How could you possibly want to learn anything else?" He couldn't really explain what it was that was moving him further. But in his heart he knew he had to go because it wasn't complete in his mind.

Q: If he was like you said before, stupid, in the ways like he'd just torture himself to learn, then it wouldn't be stupid because he's learning, but...

VR: That's why it's foxy stupid. It's stupid, meaning not complicated, but at the same time very clever.

QUESTION: Sir, I'm not sure I understood. You were saying when Naropa laid himself down for Tilopa that since he already understood the nature of impermanence, he wasn't doing this for the sake of his own enlightenment?

VR: He was, that's, you see, where he was being caught. Every time, Tilopa would say to him, "If I had a student he would do this." He never said, "Naropa, you are my student, you should do this, Naropa, you should lay [sic] down," he never said that. He said, "If I had a student, he probably would have already been down on the ground right now." So, Naropa, with somewhat, still clinging to his own egocentric notion, thinking, "He must mean me." So down he went, and he got bitten by the leeches and all this stuff. And then Tilopa would come up to him and say, "What's the matter with you? Why are you lying there like that, it looks pretty awful?" And Naropa would say, "I still believe in this stuff," you know. And then Tilopa would say to him, "If you still believe in it, you deserve this." And that would happen constantly, it would happen over twelve years, there were twelve particular incidents, if you read in the story, where it happened exactly in the same fashion. Each time Tilopa would say, "If I had a student, he would go down there and fetch me this water at this wedding feast," you know. Naropa goes down, and everybody beats him up. Tilopa comes along and sees him lying there and says, "What are you doing lying on the ground like that?" He said, "I'm about to die because I still believe in an ego," Naropa would say. And Tilopa would say to him, "Then you deserve to, if you still believe in that which makes you cling to this body." So it's that kind of story.

Q: Thank you.

VR: Interesting thing about it is that people think it happened a long time ago, and that it never happened since. But it happens all the time. Especially if you meet a genuine teacher, that kind of thing will happen to you. Not in the same way, the leeches may be psychological, in fact they are, and so is the wedding feast, and so is the temple roof. But you have to jump in any case, it seems, if you still believe in something, you have to do something.

QUESTION: Sir, could you describe what vision is? Yesterday we were talking about bringing together skill and vision and like the ground, path, and fruition of vision, and things one would do with vision?

VR: Well, vision, strictly speaking, if you want to talk about vision, is actually seeing past, present, and future in one moment coming together, that's vision. A visionary person understands cause and effect. That is to say, past, present and future. What has happened in the past has molded this present situation. What happens in this present situation will create the future situation. And someone who has vision sees those, what are called the three times. And having seen those three times they understand the

foolishness of the sentient beings like ourselves who try to fixate on one or another of those. And people who have vision are liberated from time, shall we say. Do you want to say something else about that?

Q: Yes, if I was going to make a painting, and I was going to think of some nature, something that occurs, there's lots of different things that occur on lots of different levels. You know, like there's a flower that grows, or there's like a description of, you know, some kind of state of mind where one feels, you know...

VR: Yes, yes, yes...

Q: Like there's all these different kinds of ideas of what vision would be...

VR: Well, that's different. Ideas are different than the actual thing. First, you talk about some kind of nature, right, that occurs, like the redness of red for example. That's a visionary thing. And then there's one's idea about red, how it invokes in me the beast, blah, blah, blah, you know. These kinds of things that go on in people's minds about red, you know. But red is just red. And that kind of thing is very visionary when you have that kind of experience. Red.

Q: So that's just keeping on a very, well, but, just, like a sensory experience of...

VR: Well, it's more that sensory. You might say it's a total experience. Sensory means it involves the sense organs, sense fields, but also the sense consciousness. That involves the notion of "I", involves the notion of "other", involves the notion of "meaning" or "value", involves a lot of things. But when all of those things are wrapped tightly, shall we say, packaged with an exquisite wrapping, that's called a visionary approach. It's seen as one thing, in other words. What we do usually is when we have a perception of time, and time in this case means objects [inaudible], objects appear in our time reference, we have past notion of it, present notion of it, future notion of it, and we either fixate on one or the other, right? We don't actually have total experience. It's always involved, sometimes it's involved with the thing itself. Sometimes involved with myself, looking at a thing at a distance. Sometimes it the thing and myself competing with each other for the awareness for whatever, you know, and goes on like that. What we're talking about is someone has vision, sees it completely all at once. Past, present and future. Perceiver, perception, and perceived. So one continuous field. That's vision. *Fine?* [Italian for finished] More?

Q: Yes, I'll work on that, thank you very much.

VR: Might as well. Who knows, it probably doesn't mean anything, you know. This gentleman, all the way in the back.

QUESTION: Sir, last night you spoke of Naropa's passion for knowledge and inquisitiveness. You could speak a little bit about the difference between that kind of passion and maybe the poison passion, grasping passion, and if it is possible to have a passion for knowledge with a goal in mind, or is that fixation on a goal then grasping passion?

VR: Um-mm. Generally speaking, passion at an ordinary level will always involve goal, therefore it will always be fixated. Passion at the neurotic level, let's say, is that

which fixates on the object of passion, the goal. But that particular experience in itself can be liberated from any kind of self-consciousness so that the passion and the goal of the passion can be the experience of freedom. It's possible. In terms of what you're passionate about there are gross, medium, and subtle objects of passion.

Q: Knowledge being which of those?

VR: Medium.

Q: Thank you.

QUESTION: Sir, is practice the same as you have to jump in any case?

VR: Practice? Well, it depends on who you are and what you're doing. Sometimes practice is you have to jump in any case. Sometimes practice is you don't have to do anything at all, sometimes practice is, you know, you're intense longing for something spectacular to happen. It's lots of things. It's not the same thing. It couldn't be. As long as there are various thoughts in one's mind, practice will be different according to the individual, and according to what kind of habit, habitual thinking you have. And some people approach practice from a certain point of view, it's very methodical, some people it's very ethereal, some people it's very analytical, you know, different kinds of things happen. As far as you have to jump in any case, do you mean you have to practice in any case?

Q: No, that's not exactly what I meant. It was more like as though someone says to you, "If I had a student he would —

VR: Jump off.

Q: — sit on his cushion —

VR: Right.

Q: — go out with his breath...

VR: Right. Well, in that case you have a very personal relationship with someone who would say that, because generally, teachers don't say that specifically to a student, say, like Tilopa did to Naropa. Generally, that doesn't happen until a real incredibly tight bond is formed between the teacher and the student. And then you say anything at all, back and forth, and there's a kind of complete circulation, we call lubrication of mind that happens constantly. Everything is in the present moment, it's very bright, totally bright, as if all the lights were turned on full, full blast all the time. There's no nighttime. That kind of relationship. But in terms of the teacher they will say, well, you should sit on the, if I had students altogether, and if we did the right thing as a sangha, or as a community, we would sit on these zafus and practice.

Q: Thank you.

VR: More? Oh my goodness, all right.

QUESTION: To follow up with what Mr. Friedman was saying, when the teacher says that to the group of students, in the individual case, Naropa's reaction was to go ahead and do it.

VR: Right.

Q: What's the proper relationship between student and teacher in terms of the group of students? How would an individual student relation to that kind of group instruction from a teacher?

VR: Individually.

Q: If that's the case, if the students feel that way, then is there really a difference between that kind of instruction and the group...

VR: If the student feels that way, eventually he will be sitting next to the guru. In time he will be the Naropa of the Tilopa, if the student feels that way. Isn't people say, "How can you get close to a teacher these days, there's so many students?" Follow the instructions, and sure enough you will be right there.

Q: Thank you.

VR: All right, a couple more.

QUESTION: Why would Naropa jump off the building really?

VR: Well, there are two reasons. There are two reasons why he jumped off the building. One, the first reason, is of his own stupidity. In other words, he thought Naropa meant that he should jump off. In other words, he was too, he was proud, he was very proud. He thought of himself as being Tilopa's great student, so therefore, he should do whatever Tilopa asked him to do. That's one reason, because he was proud and stupid. The second reason is because he knew if he followed the instructions carefully, he would get the enlightenment. So it's both, you see. One part, he was still thick in his mind and still stupid in his mind. On the other part he was thinking, "I should follow what he says." In both cases, in either case or together, he learned something from it.

Okay, one more...Sorry to keep you all so late.

QUESTION: If you have vision for writing a poem or creating an educational institution or building a car, how do you remain true to the vision in the course of your creations, since in my experience that's, as soon as I start to create, all the habitual patterns...

VR: The obstacles come in yes, right. Well, first of all, you can't remember your vision intact. You just remember the feeling of it, especially when you are bombarded by your habitual patterns. You won't remember the exact form of your vision. And you have to expect that right at the beginning. The problem with all of us is that we have this vision of things, and then we try to actualize it, and in the process all our habitual patterns come in and forget exactly what we were doing, and we turn out with this very funny looking thing, whether it's a poem or a sculpture, or an educational institution, it looks really strange, and we think to ourselves, "Is that what I wanted to do?" And we sort of lost track. The reason we loose track is because we think that the original vision is solid. It's not. The original vision we have is fluid, flexible, and empty. And is liable to change. It's essence, you could say, is primordial goodness and fine, no problem. Its actual form will change. So if you have that kind of relaxation when you do it and things start to get in the

way, so to speak, you want to accomplish something and things get in the way, you won't suddenly put up your defensive shield and say, "No, like Ronald Reagan, no change, everything goes (inaudible)." No flexibility, you know? So if you have a flexible mind say, well, then you have vision because you know that past, present, and future, there's no real settling point in any of those three times. They continually go around. This very moment is a memory of the past. And at the same time this moment is a projection of the future. Therefore, this moment doesn't even exist, so why be so uptight about what you want to create? If you want to create something it should be continuous. It should have past, present, and future and go on, you know, it should go. These people who think they have made their one and only statement are basically making themselves old.

Q: So remaining true to your vision is remaining true to the feeling of it rather than the specifics of it?

VR: That's right, that's right. Because if you can communicate the feeling of it, then you have done all that you wanted to do. You know, let's say that we wanted to make a, decorate a room, and in this room we wanted to have certain things present so that when people came into it and sat down they would have an experience of one kind or another. So we have this vision, we want red, blue, green, whatever. We want to make this thing happen. And we try to go out and procure those things and we can't. We can get the red, but it's not exactly the red that we wanted. What do you do at that point? Well, you get the red that's not exactly the red that you wanted. See? And you get the blue that's not exactly the blue that you wanted. And people come, and they have experience of that room. It's not the same for everybody, but in a sense it is. Because it's still the same for you, but only it's not exactly, well, it's not solidified. The fact that it's not solidified makes it continuous.

Q: So the vision creates itself?

VR: Yes, constantly. That's what the maitri thing is all about.

Q: What do you mean?

VR: The maitri postures in the rooms and all that? It's self created neurosis. You begin to see self-created neurosis by your own projection room. What red is, and blue, this, that, the other thing, (laughter). All of that stuff. I better be careful because people will say the Regent doesn't like maitri. That's terrible, I love them, maitri. (Laughter) It used to be maitri. Vision creates itself means you don't, once you have vision you never loose it. Only if you fixate on your habitual pattern then you loose it because what you, you don't loose anything, you just sort of gain something. You add things that you don't need, you know. You have an original flash of something, then whatever elements are involved, change it somewhat, make it move somewhat, shift its color or emphasis somewhat, but the original thing is still there. But its form has slightly shifted. That's all right, we don't have to worry about that.

Q: Thank you.

VR: You're welcome.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, we should really, I suppose, end our discussion at this point. Very, very enlightening for me.

Now we're going to talk about our building project. So please bear with us for just a few minutes. I know everybody got a little letter from Dean Lief, and you know we're trying, obviously, to reach our goal. We need another \$90,000 or so. We're asking you to help us.