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VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN

Naropa Institute Course: Naropa, the Mahasiddha

Talk 3 of 3

January 23, 1983

Boulder, CO

Transcribed by: Unknown

Checked by: Alan Kelly

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VAJRA REGENT OSEL TENDZIN:

Well, good evening, again ladies and gentlemen. It's very nice to see you here, the survivors [laughter]. Looks like Naropa's existence is frightening, to say the least. As we talked about earlier, conventional mind, looking at Naropa's life, becomes panicked immediately, thinking, "Oh, no! Is that's what's in store for me?" If you follow this path, it is.

Tonight we should talk about Naropa's final training and his evolution and manifestation as a holder of the Kagyü lineage, or you could say as a Buddha, as a fully awakened being, fully enlightened person. What we're talking about is his complete education. He's a fully educated person, Naropa. What happened here is that, after his twelve years with Tilopa, Naropa was more or less, you could say, he was riding on a high, and he felt really good. And he went out, and just simply went out and hung out. And this is probably the most meaningful use of the word "hanging out" that was ever used. When Naropa was hanging out, he was simply doing that. He had no project, nothing to accomplish, and nothing to remember and nothing to forget. So he just hung out. And during the course of that time, he exhibited the various siddhis. Siddhi, again, is a particular kind of power which comes from recognizing the truth of egolessness. And his fame became very, well, let's say, it was notorious, in a good sense, for being able to do things that nobody else could do, if you were ordinary human beings like ourselves. And there are stories about what is called a vaidurya [?] how he could melt razor blades on his tongue, and just by gazing at an elephant, the elephant would crash over dead and things like that [laughter] and they burned him at a stake and he didn't burn, and things like that, you know, little things that he did [laughter]. That was when he was simply dwelling in having accomplished everything that, you know, had gone on over twelve years being with Tilopa, he was just coasting on the high of being completely free.

At that time, two of his fellow students who were also students of Tilopa, called, went to Tilopa and said, Naropa is just hanging out. He's not doing anything useful, and we need him. You should call him back. And Tilopa thought a while and he said, "All right, go and get him and say that I want to see him." Tilopa himself was not all that interested whether or not Naropa was hanging out and doing these crazy things, but since these students were interested,

Tilopa was interested. So he called him back, and he said to him, "Naropa, you still have not understood the complete truth." And Naropa, of course, being, as we have discussed, the kind of student that he was, immediately sat up, and at that point Tilopa showed him the naked mind. Now this kind of transmission from teacher to student is the ultimate teaching. It cannot be spoken about, very much anyway, in words. But for those who have ever experienced this kind of teaching, it is beyond thought and beyond mind. Now this final teaching that Tilopa gave to Naropa is called the final transmission of mahamudra, mahamudra being the great seal. In other words, his consciousness and his consciousness of enlightenment was sealed by the experience of the union of his mind with his guru's mind, or his teacher's mind. At that point, he had no further questions.

This particular doctrine, or this particular transmission, I should say, has come down to us as the, what's called the pith instructions of the mahamudra lineage, and we have it today. Same thing, exact. And we owe Naropa our gratitude and devotion because of that. First of all, not only did he take the chances necessary to experience such transmission of knowledge or direct intuition, but also he understood when he heard it, which is wonderful, and we should venerate him. We do. That's why we call this Naropa Institute.

So just briefly, these are the six topics, this is the transmission in words, but transmission is not made up of words. When you get to the final point of being fully educated, then you understand mind as it is. And it is directly communicated from teacher to student without words. But the words that attributed to Tilopa are this. These are called the six topics, and he says to Naropa, "Do not imagine, think, deliberate, meditate, act, but be at rest." That's it. Don't do anything; in other words, don't do anything, just rest your mind as it is. And this is the final transmission that Naropa had.

Now let's remember that he had gone through such a training from the time he was nine years old, up until this point, that when Tilopa gave him this transmission, everything was in place. Everything was synchronized, so that he received it directly, and afterward there were no questions. Then Naropa himself, at that point, becomes a Buddha, or fully awakened person. Following that, well, in regard to that, the text talks about the twelve trials, or the twelve years he spent with Tilopa, and how those experiences helped him to finally become a fully awakened teacher, one who could transmit the dharma to other people. And the text talks in this way, that in the first three trials, Naropa removed the blemishes, or obscurations, blemishes is the way it was translated by Mr. Guenther, but he removes the obstacles of being in the world, and he realizes, first of all, what is called prajna, that is, discriminating awareness, that means to say that he realizes the first stage of one taste, or one value, beyond individual discrimination, but seeing the world in a continuous vision, shall we say. And the second three trials of Naropa removes the obscurations or obstacles of being with others. That is to say, he realizes the joy, or bliss of communication, which is called the medium grade of one taste. One taste, in this case, as we said, is non-differentiation of the meditator, meditation, and object of meditation, so it's completely one, in that sense. And third, he realizes – the third one had to do with energy – and he realizes that there is complete one taste in terms of situations, in other words, that which transpires between oneself and others, and the energy that happens there is completely free from any kind of ego-clinging. So he realizes what's called the dharmakaya, the primordial

buddha-mind. And finally, when Tilopa shows him the absolute mahamudra, the perfect realization, all the three patterns altogether dissolve. The three things that he has learned previously dissolve into absolutely one-taste. That's called the svabhavikakaya, or the rainbow body. But this sounds corny to you. It probably does sound a little bit between *The Dark Crystal* and *Star Wars* and things like that, but to tell you the truth, it actually happens that way. Ultimate realization is the meeting of mind and mind. It is not a sub – it's not a matter of deliberation or all the things that Tilopa talks about, acting, thinking, meditating, all of those. It is not any of those. It is simply being as you are, and one's mind meets the mind of the teacher as the phenomenal expression.

After that, Tilopa goes on to become the great holder of the Kagyü doctrine, and he teaches through Marpa the Translator, the one who came from Tibet, who also studied with him for twelve years. He went to India three times by foot from Tibet to get these teachings. We have, our lineage is a very, you could say, a lot of calluses, because we always did things the hard way, and Naropa teaches Marpa and says to him, this teaching, which is so good, should be carried on in Tibet, and you are the one chosen to do it. In the meantime, if you read the story, which is very interesting, which is going to come out with the publications people that we have, they're going to publish the life of Marpa, which talks about his three journeys and his experience with Naropa, and many times Naropa would, even though he knew something, knew particular teachings that Marpa was asking for, he would send Marpa to somebody else, one of the teachers that he himself or he was kind of a colleague, you know. He would say, well if you want this one, the best person to go and talk to is so-and-so over there, so Marpa would journey over there, and he'd get the teaching from so-and-so, and he'd come back, and he'd compare it to what Naropa had, and it turned out to be the same. But it was a kind of generous attitude on Naropa's part to have Marpa meet all these different teachers. We try and do the same thing, that we don't want everybody to just stick to one particular horse, you know, and say, "Well, this is the only one I'm ever going to ride," because there are other horses that are beautiful, and they're in good shape, and you might as well ride them.

So Naropa teaches a lot of people. He matures and liberates many sentient beings. He dies at the age of eighty-five, according to the story, his physical body dissolves into a rainbow, according to the story [laughs], and he had seven famous disciples, eight hundred siddha disciples, fifty-four yogis, a hundred yoginis, blah, blah, blah, and basically, the thing that's most important is to understand how this lineage is transmitted from the present, from that time to the present day, that Marpa understood Naropa's teachings in the same way that Naropa understood Tilopa's teachings, in the same way that we have been the recipients of that mind transmission up until this very moment. It has been done. It has been clearly done. This is a sort of rock-bottom, bottom line, Naropa Institute approach to life, shall we say, and that has to do with heritage, lineage, transmission, the continuity of one's awakened mind from moment to moment. Naropa is the example, and we are thankful to him.

And basically I could say a lot of things about this, and it could last, oh, maybe a week or months, but this is it for now. You might have questions about what we have already discussed or about what I have said tonight or anything at all, what you're doing here at

Naropa Institute, anything. So if you do, please go ahead. I don't want to burden you too much with excessive talking [laughs].

QUESTION: Sir, I have a question about the Six Topics. It's always been interesting to me that in many ways it sounds like the shamatha technique that we've been taught by the Vajracarya, and I was wondering if you could say something about that.

VR: Is that a rhetorical question, Mr. Milani, or do you really want to know?

Q: I really want to know.

VR: What's your idea?

Q: Well, in some ways it's similar, but except in two categories, I guess, in thinking and meditating. Because –

VR: Well, which ones are similar?

Q: Well, “Do not imagine” –

VR: Imagine.

Q: – deliberate.

VR: Deliberate.

Q: – act.

VR: Act.

Q: – but be at rest.”

VR: “But be at rest.” Those four are similar to the shamatha-vipashyana technique.

Thinking?

Q: Thinking and meditating.

VR: How come, why not thinking?

Q: Well, because we're taught to work with thinking.

VR: Not too much. We say, label thoughts –

Q: Yes.

VR: – thinking.

Q: And that's in the sphere of meditating.

VR: [Laughs] Well, don't meditate then.

Q: So that's the difference. [Laughter]

VR: You mean altogether, altogether? Yes. Altogether, that's the truth.

Q: But it implies that there's some connection between this ultimate teaching of Tilopa to Naropa and the basic shamatha technique.

VR: Well, meditation practice is the connection. You can't say, “don't meditate,” if you haven't done it. How would the person understand what you meant? When Tilopa says to Naropa, “Do not imagine, think, deliberate, meditate, act, but be at rest,” it's only because Naropa knows what meditation is, and therefore he releases the last vestige of holding on to ego through his meditation practice. Don't even do that, he says. But he can't let go of it unless he knows what it is. Which goes right back to our first talk, because if you don't know how to speak, act and all the rest of it, how can you be ultimately enlightened? Since all of it is made up of having [inaudible: following?] thoughts, including meditation practice, how are you going to let go of it until it's firmly established in your mind, and seeing, you could say visually – which

is the same thing as seeing with your mind – clearly, what meditation is? And at that point, when Tilopa says to him, “Do not imagine, think, deliberate, meditate, act, but be at rest,” Naropa understands what that means, so he drops the concern. Be at rest. What's the next line? The first part is telling him basically what he doesn't have to do. Read that again.

Q: “Do not imagine –

VR: Well, read the verse in front of that.

Q: Okay. “This is transcendent awareness” –

VR: Wait, wait, wait, wait. Before that, before he says to Naropa, you're still messing around with this powerful thing. Directly before that.

Q: Directly before that?

VR: Directly before that.

Q: It just says he sang his song.

VR: Right before that, before he sings his song. What happens right before that? Don't go too far, just right before that. Hmm?

Q: No, it's his song.

VR: No, no, let me see, let me see, come here. [VR looks at Mr. Milani's copy of *The Life and Teachings of Naropa*] Oh, this is good, actually, we should say that. Naropa said, “It is my fault that habit-forming thoughts spread like the blemishes of the moon,” yes right. This is funny. This is Guenther's thing. You can't understand any of it. [Laughter] Start from here. “Listen to this, oh great pandit Naropa.”

Q: What?

VR: Kasoripa. Where is it? Oh, this is the whole thing. [Reads] “Tilopa sang this song of oral instructions, in which the meaning of supreme goal-realization is condensed.” This is good for us, because, you know, we like that condensed stuff [laughter; VR continues reading]

*Naropa, you are a worthy vessel.  
In the lamasery of Pullahari,  
In the spacious sphere of radiant light, ineffable,  
The little bird of mind as transference has risen high  
By its wings of coincidence.  
Dismiss the craving of belief in an ego.*

Now this means that – how did you get me into this? [Laughter] “The little bird of mind as transference” means that mind itself is not embodied, but, like a little bird, flies from place to place. That means that one's birth in a human body, or in any body, is the transference of consciousness from one state of being to the next.

“Has risen high by the wings of coincidence” means that, through this transference of consciousness from one birth to the next, by means of coincidence, you have arrived at this particular spot, which is the best one to arrive at.

“Dismiss the craving of belief in an ego.” Because this coincidence has happened through the transference of consciousness from one life to the next, understand that as transitoriness and dismiss belief in an ego.

[Reads]

*In the lamasery of non-dual transcending awareness [Aside: It's called  
prajna]–  
In the offering pit of the apparitional body,  
By the fire of awareness deriving from the bliss and heat of mystic warmth,  
The fuel of evil tendencies of normal forms  
Of body, speech, and mind has been consumed.*

So what happens here is that through prajna, that is, discriminating awareness, one's mind becomes so clear and precise that one's body is seen as apparitional, meaning transparent. Therefore one cannot attach particular significance to one's body. Having done that, the consciousness which resides in the body is freed from the evil tendencies of passion, aggression and ignorance. "The fuel of evil tendencies of normal forms of body, speech and mind has been consumed." That is to say, our preoccupation with grasping and fixation is consumed by seeing the transparent quality of this body through transcending awareness. That is prajna.

"The fuel of dream tendencies has been burnt up," means more than just seeing that normal conscious life is transparent, even dreams are seen that way. So "Dismiss the craving of duality of this and that." So having seen that waking and dreaming have no substance, therefore craving is dismissed.

[Reads]

*In the lamasery of the ineffable,  
The sharp knife of intuitive understanding, Of Great Bliss, the Mahamudra,  
Has cut the rope of jealousy in the intermediate state.  
Dismiss the craving that causes all attachment.*

This means that having already cut the ties to one's life, in a physical sense, one's body, speech and mind, having cut those ties to an ego that possesses those things that the great bliss arises from that, which is called the Mahamudra, and that cuts the rope of jealousy in the intermediate state. The intermediate state is called a bardo, that is, the state between, which is called becoming, between this particular existence and future existence. Now you can interpret that in two ways. This particular existence is simply your state of mind that it is right now and your state of mind as it will be in the next moment. There is a space between those two. [To Milani:] How did you get me into that? There is a space between those two, in the ordinary conscious state between the two, there is a gap. In that gap, one has either the possibility of fear or enlightenment. In this case what Tilopa is talking about is cutting the rope of jealousy in the intermediate state is not hankering for existence previously or about to come up. Between those two, cut the rope of jealousy that is the craving for existence of one kind or another by experiencing the great bliss, that is to say, the momentary brilliance of one's own consciousness is possible. That's why it's called ineffable.

“Walk the hidden path of the wish fulfilling gem that is the dharma.” The hidden path means that nobody understands it because it hasn't been spoken by anybody, it is your innate – innate is a funny word – it is your own being, it's hidden from yourself by yourself. Wish-fulfilling gem is your ultimate expression as a dharmic person.

“Leading to the realm of the heavenly tree, the changeless.” That is the continuity of consciousness without effort.

“Untie the tongues of mutes. Stop the stream of Samsara of belief in an ego. Recognize your very nature as a mother knows her child.” This is the complete experience of one's being as it is.

“This is transcendent awareness cognizant in itself,” means that nothing prompts awareness to be awareness, awareness doesn't come from anywhere, it's not generated by a thing or causal affectation. It simply is.

“Beyond the path of speech, the object of no thought. I, Tilopa, have nothing at which to point. Know this as pointing in itself to itself.” So, this is the preliminary instruction that he gives to Naropa. “I Tilopa, have nothing at which to point.” That's where the actual transmission occurs. Then he says, “Know this as pointing in itself to itself.” That's the confirmation. And then he says, “Do not act, do not imagine, think, deliberate, meditate or” blah blah blah.

So that's what happens. Oh, did I answer your question? I'm not sure that I did. [Laughter] Shamatha-vipashyana is that, exactly the same point. It's the same point you begin with, it's the same point you end with, as I said earlier on. The first time you ever meditate, the first time you ever look nakedly at your own mind in its pure and primordial state, is the exact moment of your enlightenment. That is to say, your full complete realization of the truth. In the meantime, if you have habitual thoughts, these are good instructions.

Q: So the original spark or inspiration – how do you continue that?

VR: You don't. That's what he told Naropa finally – don't think, act, deliberate, meditate, be at rest.

Q: But there seems to be some kind of continuity there of the –

VR: Only to those of us who think about continuity. As it says in the text, Naropa had no more questions. It cannot be resolved by thought. As it says, “This is transcending awareness” – how does it go?

Q: [Reads] “...transcendent awareness cognizant in itself, Beyond the path of speech, the object of no thought.”

VR: “The object of no thought.”

Q: “I, Tilopa, have nothing at which to point. Know this as pointing in itself to itself.”

VR: Right, the first point is no words can say it, no thought can think it. This is the reality as it is. So how to continue it? You can't. Or you don't. Or you can't, but doesn't matter.

Q: But it comes back at the end –

VR: If it does, it depends on who's there to see it. Only the students will know. For yourself, you will never know. The students will say, “Ah, that was a great teacher that I met.” But for yourself, it's the red is still red, blue is still blue. [Laughs]

Q: Thank you for the commentary.

VR: You're welcome. Thank you for asking. [Laughs] I certainly would not have done it unless you did. [Laughter]

QUESTION: Sir, you said that Tilopa sent Naropa away after twelve years? And –

VR: He didn't send him away, particularly, he just said, "Well, go ahead and do what you want to do."

Q: And then he called him back.

VR: He called him back only because of the students' devotion. He himself, Tilopa, was not interested in what Naropa was doing.

Q: So he wasn't concerned that Naropa did not have the final transmission?

VR: No. You see, these things only happen according to the situation and what's called "the little bird of mind" as is said, blah, blah, blah, and a coincidence happens. Coincidence in this case is not just like what we call like flipping a coin. Coincidence means co-incident, that two things happen simultaneously, and therefore the students requested Tilopa to bring back their great. They had such faith in Naropa, these two, Kasaripa and whatever his name is, it doesn't matter. That they asked Tilopa bring him back, he's such a good teacher, we shouldn't let him just hang out in this blissful it state.

Q: Well, how come it was at that point that Tilopa said to Naropa –

VR: There is no outcome. That is the same question he asked. How is it that, you know, this stuff continues. There isn't any point. There's no point to your being alive, either.

Q: Thank you.

VR: [Inaudible; laughter]. There's no point. There's none whatsoever. We just happen to exist. And since we happen to exist, the coincidence of our existence meeting together this weekend is delightful and produces light. Other times the coincidence of people meeting produces a darkness. And, you know, that stuff. Relatively speaking.

QUESTION: Sir, since we're not enlightened beings and perhaps we experience brief moments of being at rest, in the meantime it seems that our motto is do, imagine, think, deliberate, act and meditate.

VR: No, no, no. Take that to be your motto right now. "Do not –

Q: And yet –

VR: And even if you do all those things, take your motto to be "do not." It's very simple, since we have not completely achieved perfect great enlightenment, we should emulate the lineage and the forefathers, those who have. What did they do? We should do in the same way. And if you think of it the opposite way, you know, all we do is occupy ourselves until the time that we think we are ready to not do it, at that time we will not be ready to not do it, because it will be too hard.

Q: Perhaps I didn't mean "do," but be patient with ourselves when we do, since that's part of our unraveling to the point of –

VR: Yes, definitely, but even so, we should have the imagination, the deliberateness, the meditation, the action, the thinking, to imagine, think, meditate, and all the rest, not doing it. In other words, you should have the resting quality. Even though you're doing it, you should have



the resting quality of not doing it. And that comes about by following the path that has been given, and the practices like shamatha-vipashyana, the ordinary meditation practice that we have. So you should always think in some ways that you have already achieved the complete state of buddhahood. You should always have that feeling that it actually exists in your body, speech and mind; that you are the perfect Buddha. But you shouldn't take it seriously.

Q: Thank you.

VR: You're welcome. This gentleman here? Do we have a microphone on this side? No. Okay.

QUESTION: This isn't an incredibly deep question. Did Naropa stop meditating for the last twenty years of his life, or –

VR: Well, you see, the point is that meditation at that point *is* your life, so the question of stopping and starting doesn't exist. That's why it talks about the dream-state and awakened state, that those things become purified of any discursive thought or habitual pattern. So –

Q: He's without habitual patterns

VR: Absolutely without habitual pattern. And therefore, whatever he does is pure expression of awakened mind. So he's the incarnate Buddha. There are lots of stories. You wait until this biography comes out on Marpa, you should read it, to see how that actually manifests to other beings, visually, and sensory, I should say, through the sense-consciousness, how that manifests.

Q: So he would be constantly a practitioner.

VR: Well, he wouldn't even think about it, about being a practitioner, because he just is the embodiment of it. It's interesting, you know, it's like people say about Rinpoche, they say, "Does he meditate?" I have known him for twelve years, and I've never seen him meditate as we know it, but I've seen him as completely consistent for twelve years. It seems to me that there's some meditation going on there. The consistency or continuity of the awakened quality, waking up – this is my own testimony, shall we say – waking up from deep sleep, I have been there, going to sleep, I have been there, in the middle of the night, I have been there, day and night, I have been there to see, and always looking to see if there's any change. There's no change. "The heavenly tree, the changeless, the Wish-Fulfilling Gem." This is what we're all doing here, anyway. To see that embodied in the guru means that the lineage is perfectly true and direct. In the same way, Naropa had no preconceptions, therefore he was not interested in making a project out of his life, including meditation practice. But we should be careful that we don't try to imitate things that we can't really handle. If we can, go right ahead, but be careful to know that we shouldn't get into the idea that we should put our hands into boiling water and think that nothing's going to happen to our hand. Do you know what I mean? That kind of thing. We should experience the path and the stages the way it's been described and prescribed and taught to us. Therefore, once we have achieved and accomplished those stages, we will know for ourselves whether or not we are lying, deceiving or real. In the same way, meditation practice becomes continuous. If you practice meditation, in the beginning you practice in order to get sane. In the middle you practice in order to stay sane. In the end, you practice just simply because you do.

Q: It sounds pretty natural.

VR: It is! It's very straightforward. People always wonder who invented this stuff. It's true. People say, all the practices that we have, you know, and there are lots of them, they say, "Who thought about this? It works, but who thought about it?" Nobody did. They say, "Buddha thought about it." Who's Buddha? You are. When you experience it, you thought about it. They say, "Yes, but it was given to me by somebody else." True. That is a compassionate action, and that's the basis of human life. If you have compassionate action, you will teach other people how to be sane. And then when they discover that, they have no choice but to do the same. That becomes continuous practice. That's a good question.

Q: It seems like that's what everyone's looking for.

VR: Everybody! Everybody wants to be happy.

Q: I'm here, anyway.

VR: Well, happy is a phrase, is a nasty word, for most people. But the point is, is that we all want to be happy. You say, well, what do you mean by happy? Happy. [Laughter] No frivolousness, no expectations, no blah, blah, blah, no blah, blah, blah, just happy, content, straightforward, continuous, awake, bright, all the rest of those things you could say, but everybody wants it. Yes. Well, there is a way.

QUESTION: For the novice, what does taking one's seat mean?

VR: Well, it means not doing anything extraneous. That is to say, when you move your body, when you speak, when you eat, or all the things that you do with your physical existence, not doing anything other than what you should be doing, or what is natural to what the body of a human being does. You know, when you eat slightly more than you should, your stomach is upset. It's very simple. It's that kind of thing. If you're bloated, because you ate slightly more than you should. Taking one's seat means to do things in their simple and precise and obvious way. You know, we are, how to say, we're spoiled people. I was saying the other day, you know, you turn on the light, you turn the switch and the light goes on, you say, "Naturally, of course. That's what should happen. Flip the switch, light goes on." I was talking to the advisory committee to raise money for the Naropa Institute. I said, "We should venerate Edison, in that case, or whoever invented the light bulb, because when we flip the switch, we should do a few prayers and devotions too, to the person who invented that. But no, we just flip it, and say, oh, light, flip, switch. Obviously. We have no respect, [laughs] veneration for the lineage of people who made it possible to have these lights. It's not part of our culture to do that, this Western culture. But the culture of the Buddhist tradition, and especially the Kagyü tradition, is to venerate those people who made it possible for us to light up our own mind. So we should have that – oh, I'm sorry, I'm just going on here. [Laughter] What was it you said? [Laughter]

Q: You answered the question.

VR: Oh, good. [Laughter] [gap in recording] . . . doesn't matter.

Q: Thank you.

QUESTION: Sir, I have a question about the third step in the removing of obstacles, the dharmakaya, and how that –

VR: That situation's energy.

Q: That energy would, that is –

VR: Energy between two people, yes.

Q: – what that is or how –

VR: Well, the first thing is, the first obstacle is oneself, the notion of being somebody altogether. That's the first obstacle. That is removed, that has been removed by Naropa, by doing these three different practices, which are in the text, the first three he did, whatever they are. That removes any kind of clinging to self. The second three practices he did removes any kind of clinging to other, or notion of other as real. The third is the actual space between the two, or the communication, the energy between the two. That in itself is not real. You see, you can, first of all, think of yourself as not real and experience that as true. Then you can experience other as not real, but you still have this sense of energy or back and forth, communication, that you think is real, finally. It's the environmental experience. That in itself is not real, the environment. So that, the veil of ignorance about environment is taken away as well. See, we may be talking to each other right now, right, and I think, "There's no ego here, there's no ego there." But there's this trace of environment, of all the others, and the walls, and, you know, the space itself, that we say, "Well, it could be real." That itself is not real as well. So completely cleaned out, the preconceptions, and then finally, all those three are cleaned out in the svabhavikakaya.

Q: Thank you.

VR: You're welcome.

QUESTION: You talked about the messenger of yesterday, and thirty-six deformities. They were a reflection of Naropa.

VR: Um-hum. Naropa's perception. Yes?

Q: Yes. What reflection was he? What were thirty-six –

VR: Thirty-seven.

Q: Thirty-seven. What were they to him? I mean –

VR: Well, to him, when he saw them, they were something outside of himself.

Q: No, but were they of him?

VR: Oh, what were they of him. Well, according to the Buddhist teaching, that you and I have lived many times, not as Pablo and Ösel Tendzin, particularly, but, you know, throughout the karma of our conscious experience, we have taken birth many times. And during that, those births, we have acted in such a way to obscure our own pure being, or enlightened mind. Those thirty-seven things were Naropa's obscurations through his many lifetimes. But he saw them visually in the presence, in the vision of the old hag, which means that he was a pretty, what shall we say, advanced dude, to be able to see that. Usually, we don't see anything. We just see a couple of, you know, we go along in our life, and sometimes we see something we don't like, and we say, "Eh, I don't like that." You know, we just sort of pass it off and go along. We don't realize that what we don't like is also our own mind. But he saw all thirty-seven at once. That's what made him go on to find out who Tilopa was and find out who he was.

Q: When was Naropa first enlightened?

VR: First, probably quite early. Probably before he was born as Naropa. There are different stages of enlightenment. What does enlightenment mean? Enlightenment simply means like a camera. Like a regular camera, you have a shutter, right? And the degree that you open the shutter is how much light you let in. Enlightenment is the same way with your mind. To the degree that your mind is open, that's how much light you let in. If you open your mind completely, then you let in the full, complete light. But Naropa, in his case, through lifetimes, is opening this particular shutter of his own enlightenment, the same way we're doing. So his complete enlightenment was the story of this particular lifetime that we're talking about. That's his complete enlightenment. Everything's fully open, and there's no restriction at all. But in previous lives he had practiced the dharma to the point where he had achieved a certain degree of enlightenment. So when he was born as Naropa, or whatever his name was when he was born – he had lots of names – there was something already happening. Same thing with those of us who are here. We wouldn't be listening to this or we wouldn't be part of this unless that had happened already, previously.

Q: He picked up where he left off?

VR: Exactly. [Laughter] That's what we're doing.

Q: Why did Naropa “hang out,” so to speak?

VR: Well, once you have a certain kind of meditation experience, all you want to do is hang out, because nothing really makes any difference. And that's why it's important to have a teacher, because the teacher will tell you at that point, “I know how you feel, but still it's important to help other people.” And that's why he came back. Otherwise, he was just hanging around.

Q: But do you think he would have just kept hanging out?

VR: Yes!

Q: That's like he didn't care?

VR: That's right.

Q: About –

VR: Anything.

Q: And –

VR: Now that's a particular kind of meditation experience that one has along the way, where nothing matters and everything is a kind of spontaneous experience. It takes the teacher finally to remind the student that, even though you've had such an experience, you should work now for others so they could also experience that freedom. You have something in there? He wants to read something there.

Don Milani: When the two disciples came to Tilopa, they ask about Naropa's whereabouts, he said that “Naropa has attained the highest realization, mahamudra, and with the words that nothing remained to be asked whether I or Dorje Chang [Vajradhara] were there, he went to unknown countries. But he did add this: “I have, I gave him this admonition: in Tibet, the land

of spiritual darkness, there lives Marpa, capable of kindling the flame of the Noble Doctrine.”

So he did seem to give him a hint that –

VR: – there's somebody else.

DM: Yes, and you can't just –

VR: Well, he didn't exactly say that you can't just, he said that there's somebody else, which is slightly different, because you can just.

DM: – that the precious teachings need to be handed down.

VR: Well, not exactly that way. You see, all he was saying is that there is somebody else. He wasn't saying that you should do something about it as such. Until later on, then he said, “In the lamasery of Pullahari,” right, you know, “you should enlighten Marpa,” and all this stuff. That's a prophecy. That's before Marpa ever came on the scene. Marpa came on years later. But the main thing is that there's no materialism involved, you see. That he's not saying, “Naropa, you shouldn't hang around so crazy like you're hanging around, and just melt razor blades on your tongue [laughter] and knock over elephants like that.” He didn't say that. He said, he didn't criticize Naropa for being the way he was being. He was saying that it's true that what you're experiencing is the ultimate mahamudra, but there's another person coming along who has to experience that, and you have to show them. And Naropa said, Naropa knew at that point, “Oh, all right.” So he did. The same way it's happened through the generations, because the gurus themselves and the teachers have no particular care to show anybody anything. But it happens that a student emerges, and then there's no choice. And the same way with our lives. We really don't have any desire to learn all the things that we pick up, all the books and things that we want to do, but somehow, it occurs to us that we should do something. And, therefore, because we think that way, all these different things happen to us, and we meet so-and-so and this kind of thing, and we learn. It's what's called coincidence. In the Buddhist tradition, in the Sanskrit, it's called mangalam, , auspiciousness. Co-emergence. Two things arise at the same time, creates the spark of sanity. That's the generator of Naropa Institute altogether. So anything else? Gentleman in the back.

Q: Sir, could I ask you a question about something you said last week at the refuge ceremony?

VR: You certainly can.

Q: You said –

VR: If I said it, you can ask it.

Q: [Laughs] Well, tell me if you actually said this. [Laughter]

VR: That will be very hard for me to do.

Q: Okay.

VR: But go ahead.

Q: Of all the detours there are from being yourself, just being yourself is the most efficient.

VR: Efficient detour?

Q: That's what it sounded like when – [laughter]

VR: You got me. [Laughter] If I said that, I must have been in one of my esoteric modes. [Laughter]

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Q: Well, I've been trying to figure it out ever since, and – [laughter]  
VR: Of all the detours – say it again?  
Q: Of all the detours from being yourself, just being yourself is the most efficient.  
VR: That's great! That's fantastic. I said that? [Laughter]  
Q: I think so.  
VR: Oh, that's good. Well, you should work on that one. [Laughter]  
Q: I shall. [Laughter]  
VR: You will. You'll get it. So. One last hurrah.

QUESTION: How is the form of your practice and the phenomenal world the presence of your teacher?

VR: How is it so?  
Q: Yes.  
VR: [Chuckles] Why is the sky blue, Johnny? There's just no way I could answer that. It is – if you practice, then you'll understand. I could give you a high-falutin' explanation of that, but I'm not going to do it. I'll meet you at the crossroads someday, and then we shall recognize each other as we are. So. [Someone whispers to the Regent] You think so? He has one question I could answer. [Laughter] It's a promise, by the way, if you're there, I'll be there.  
Q: I'll be there. [Laughter]  
VR: Okay. So then what we will understand will be totally what we understand.

QUESTION: It came up during the weekend as I was labeling my thoughts.

VR: Are you Canadian?  
Q: Not quite.  
VR: Oh. Where are you from?  
Q: California. [Laughter]  
VR: Where in California?  
Q: Southern California. [Laughter]  
VR: Where in Southern California?  
Q: Los Angeles.  
VR: Born in Los Angeles?  
Q: Yes.  
VR: Where in Los Angeles? [Laughter]  
Q: Temple Hospital.  
VR: Where did you grow up?  
Q: Los Angeles.  
VR: Where in Los Angeles?  
Q: Westwood.  
VR: You grow up in Westwood?  
Q: Yes.  
VR: Did you go to school in Westwood?  
Q: Yes, until I went to school in North Hollywood.

VR: North Hollywood. I worked in North Hollywood. In a hospital in North Hollywood.

Q: Which one?

VR: It was called Doctor's –

Q: Oh, Doctor's Hospital.

VR: Right. Yes. [Laughter] I worked there in 1968.

Q: It's on Riverside.

VR: Yes. That's the one. [Laughter] That's right. It's still there, I imagine.

Q: Yes, I used to eat lunch across the street from it.

VR: Did you? How's the food?

Q: The food was good.

VR: It was healthy. It must be in California. Anyway, what is it that I could answer?

Q: It – during the weekend, I was labeling my thoughts “thinking,” and it occurred to me, what is the Tibetan for “thinking,” what was the word that they used to label the thoughts, if they used a word?

VR: [Chuckles] I'm sure they did, otherwise we wouldn't have it today.

Q: But it's not a known, not something really common, of the Tibetan word that we might still use.

VR: I have no idea. I have no knowledge of Tibetan myself. But I assume that since we have it, it came from somewhere, and since we were taught it by a Tibetan, I assume that the Tibetan must have some – [laughter]

Q: Well, I'm sorry I didn't give you a question that you could answer. [Laughter]

VR: I wondered when you said that if it were actually true, and I doubted that I could answer it.

Q: Thank you very much.

VR: In any case, it doesn't really matter. Thinking is thinking, isn't it. It's very direct. So anything else? Finis.

Don Milani [aside]: Thinking is universal.

VR: What's universal is thinking.

So this is it. How nice. Straightforward and good. I appreciate your attentiveness. I have said just very simple things about the great Lord Naropa, the holder of the immaculate dharma, the Kagyü lineage teacher. What I've said is not very good, in the sense that the people before me have been very good and could explain the dharma clear as day. All I can do is say my best, and in this case, probably not as good as I would like, and not as good in order for you to be enlightened on the spot, but being an ambitious person, I think I'll probably keep on going, and try to understand as best I can these teachings that were given to me, and further to transmit them to the rest of you when I have the chance and when you are around.

So I'd like to thank you for your patience. If any little bit of merit is derived from this, it is because of the people that have preceded us. It is also because we are interested in it. And that's good. So thank you, and continue your practice, whatever it may be. Don't stop and don't take a vacation and don't think that you have reached the final goal until you have. When you have, you won't be thinking anyway, so don't worry about it. [Laughter] And the main thing is

not to deceive yourself by saying, "Ah, now I can rest." There's no particular time for that. One might think that this is a rather cruel and inhumane punishment for being human, but on the other hand, we got ourselves here, so we might as well work with it. So thank you, altogether.