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VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN

Intensive Training Session: Generosity: Transcending the Boundaries of Self

Karme-Choling

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Talk One of Three

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VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN:

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to this Intensive Training Session. Our topic is generosity. And the working basis is transcending the boundary of self. To begin with, we should be clear about what we mean by “self” to begin with, and then “boundary,” and further, “transcending.” And how that relates to generosity.

So to begin with: self. Self is the product and definite product of fear. Fear causes us to contract. When we contract, we conceive of ourselves as being an entity, a someone with name and form. And because we contract, we immediately see ourselves in contrast to everything else. So that, in brief, is the notion of a self. How this self came to be is due to ignorance. That is to say, ignoring what is. When we ignore what is, we are suddenly shocked, taken by surprise. Because we have been ignoring things we are shocked. Something suddenly arises, and that produces a contrast, and that contrast produces the notion of me, I, and mine, or other. When we have that situation, we become frozen. We solidify the notion of ourselves as an entity, so-called “blank blank”—whatever your name is—and so-called existence, so-called desire, and so-called fulfillment.

Now this particular process happens very quickly. Even to say it happens quickly is a euphemism for the fact that it happens immediately. It's not so much the case that we ignored something some time or other, and then suddenly, we became shocked, but we're talking about moment-to-moment experience. The development of the notion of a self is so quick. You could

compare it to the time it takes to strike a match. And you also could compare it in that way to the spontaneous combustion. Suddenly, it's hot, and it burns. This so-called self, which we all have a tendency to believe in, at least acknowledge as a reference point, is, according to the teachings of Buddha, an illusory phenomenon brought about by the fact that we have a body, that there is a body, that there are sense perceptions, sense fields. Because of that, we make a big deal and make a self out of it. You know, you say "I see the apple." In fact, we are taught in school "I see the apple." "See Jane run. Run, Jane, run. I see Jane run." We are taught immediately to identify what is with self and then an object, something that the self relates to.

Now, how this process is based on ignorance is very interesting, I think, and some people consider it mystical. In fact, it's talked about as being a mystical experience: this creation, so-called creation. This is what the theistic world thinks about as the creation of living beings like Adam and Eve and the world and the universe and whatnot. From the Buddhist point of view, this creation is not a particular event in time which can be distinguished from another event. Hope I'm not getting too heady here [laughter]. In terms of our ordinary experience, everyday experience, what happens is that we suddenly, and quite suddenly, wake up. And being awake causes a flash, almost like a flashbulb going off in your face. You see something. You know, when a flashbulb goes off, you see a dot, a blue dot, or something like that. And you think you see something there. But that blue dot doesn't really exist as we know. The same thing in our ordinary experience, when we're going along, because of ignorance, going along, and suddenly, there's a flash of some kind. Usually, it's somebody gets hurt or you're shocked, you fall down, or some seemingly extraordinary thing happens. There's a flash, and it's like that blue dot, and you think "I exist, therefore, I have to do something about that. Something has to happen here." Those flashes are going on all the time. It depends on how dull we are whether or not we see them. And depends on how generous we are whether or not we acknowledge that flash as nothing is separate. It's not a separate thing. That is to say, acknowledge that flash as the creation of ego, self. We don't have to do that. But we are shocked, because something out of the ordinary happens. Well, that's generally how we could relate to this idea of ignorance.

And fear comes in after that. When we are shocked by something extraordinary or seemingly out of the ordinary, we freeze, pull back, contract. This causes us to be ungenerous, let us say, much more so, very stingy. Because once we pull back, we have frozen our assets, so to speak, into a self. So we have to keep that. And everything other than that we have to view as a threat to whether or not we're going to lose our capital. We're going, probably, if we venture out with our capital, we might get into a risky situation. Quite so, quite so.

The boundary is the experience of contrast. Self is basically mistaken awareness. The notion of self is simply mistaken awareness. There is no particular self, just like that blue dot. If you try to find out who you are and ask yourself who you are, no matter how you crank up the

machine, you won't find anything. This is what the Buddha taught. This has been the teaching of Buddhism throughout the ages. But there is no way to actually grasp what a self is. Even in the highest theistic teachings, they say it's unspeakable, ungraspable. In that case, what's the point of even saying that it is? But nevertheless, because we panic and freeze ourselves into thinking "I am so and so" whatnot naturally, seemingly, we say "Well, if I am so and so, then you are so and so." We are separate and different, therefore we have to watch out for each other, have to watch out what we are doing, so that's what causes a lot of paranoia. Frozen, ungenerous, is due to a belief in a self.

And belief in a self brings no joy to one's life at all, because we always have ourselves as a reference point. When we have ourselves as a reference point, we're never thinking about anything else, just "How does this relate to me?" The color of the room, whether I like the day or not, whether I like it when it's sunny or it's warm or it's rainy. Or, "I like this," "I don't like that," "I like this person," "I don't like that person," "Someone's threatening to me," "Someone's my friend." It's always in relationship to me, I, this, self. That's a very stingy point of view. Ungenerous, we could say.

The point of our seminar here and our time together is to work on what actually is generous, what we mean by generosity. And that, basically, comes down to thawing, unfreezing, melting the ice cube of I, me. And the primary way of doing that is developing generosity. Now, this is the main teaching, and the beginning teaching, I should say, of the bodhisattva's path, the mahayana, the great vehicle, and the second turning of the wheel of the Buddha, the wheel of dharma. Without this particular teaching, it would be impossible to actually liberate oneself completely from oneself, which basically is, I suppose, what we're trying to do, at least on the beginning level.

When we're stingy and we're keeping ourselves as a fortress against the other, which could—"other" in this case means anything other than our notion of who we are, what we are, anything, you know. It could be spiders, bacteria, athlete's foot. Anything is other, from that point of view. We are trying to keep ourselves from that. There's no joy in it. There's no real delight in living that way. There's just constant paranoia and stinginess and always looking over one's shoulder, waiting to see what the next threat will be.

Generosity, the practice of generosity, is the process of thawing or melting the notion of separateness to begin with, that there is this notion of separateness. This is a workable idea. Separateness is a concept. It evolves from the notion of being a so-and-so, you know, a self, a somebody. So in order to begin, we should recognize that the notion of separateness is actually reinforcing the notion of self. So to begin with, the practice of generosity is melting this idea, this frozen idea of separateness.

Most people feel that, in order to be generous, you have to have something. And if you have something to give, then you can be generous. But if you don't, then you can't. Well, if you had a lot of money, you could give a little bit of money to Karne Choling, and therefore, you know, you could consider yourself generous because you can keep the place going, and people are practicing meditation, and you feel good about that. Or to, you know, UJA or United Fund, or whatever it is, you know, to your local fire department. You feel good about that, you know. But the question is, is that, or the point is that, if you have to hoard and hold onto the wealth, then basically it's still locked in the notion of possession, and that possession is locked in the notion of "I."

We can thaw that notion altogether. We can actually melt it. But what we have to do is, first of all, pierce this belief in ego itself. That's the most generous thing we can do to begin with. Before we think about helping others and doing good for all the world or for all sentient beings, we have to actually pierce this notion of "I am doing it," which is really in the way. It's in the way of having a good life. It's in the way of actually enjoying your life and fulfilling. Fulfillment, period. It's actually in the way. So what we have to do is cut that umbilical cord, this belief in a self, which occurs in so many ways.

It's basically your trip, our trip. We think this and we think that, and while we're thinking it we believe that we're thinking it and we believe that's the way we are. And we think something else, and then we believe that. And we think something else, and then we believe that. And this particular "I," so-called "I," keeps believing itself all the time, so to speak, and we become what's generally known as neurotic. In other words, everything that happens we believe it, and then when it doesn't happen, we switch to something else, and, well, you know, we go on like that. There's no real taste. Just keeps changing, and we keep believing in each thing that happens as being who we are and what we are, and it goes on.

So we have to do something about that, don't you think? [Laughter] That would be a good idea. But if it's a good idea, we have to hold onto that idea. Not quite. We don't have to hold onto that idea. We have to feel the movement of that idea. This is called the generation of bodhichitta. That is, to somehow, because of all of this, discover that there's a real notion which is not a self, self-invoked notion, but there is a real notion of freeing oneself and giving to others. Or giving, period, never mind to others, just giving. There's a real notion of that, which is not involved with a reference point to "me." It just is something that's in the air, so to speak.

Developing generosity is the foundation of complete fulfillment, what we call in the Buddhist tradition, enlightenment. When the Buddha said to his first disciples "I am the enlightened one" and touched his hand to the earth and said "this earth is my witness," that was the very moment that this teaching came to this particular age. There was no ego involved,

no self. It was witnessed by the earth, meaning that you could see it plainly without having to interpret it according to your reference point. Each one of us should have that experience and be that way. Then we can have really a delightful world. We can actually have a feast of our lives. We could work together. Be together. But the point is, I suppose, is that one actually has to generate that feeling that you would like to liberate yourself from your deep freeze.

Complete enlightenment is the goal of the buddhadharma. It's the reason why we even have these particular sessions together. It's not simply so that you could be educated about the facts and figures, or the, you know, the particular doctrines and whatnot. The goal of our being together and the goal of our practice is to attain enlightenment. And to attain enlightenment means especially to attain enlightenment so that others could do the same. That's the notion of generosity. The best way to work with that is to study and practice the dharma, very simply.

To study the dharma means that you start to give up your personal point of view, which is a fascinating thing, by the way. You get fascinated when you start to study the dharma. It almost makes you feel blissed out [laughter]. You start to study it, and you think "Ohh, ohh, ohh." What's happening there is you're losing reference point to what I think, what I know, what my opinion is. You begin to study the dharma—well, you could say, "Well, why don't we study anything?" you know. "We could study botany, or we could study, you know, comic books." And why wouldn't that happen? Well, it doesn't happen, so why talk about it [laughter]? When you study the dharma, it does happen. And that's the actual fact. So the proof is in the proof.

So you feel that way when you study the dharma because what it does is—when you study the dharma, it takes the cork or the plug out of the bathtub. When you're lying in the bathtub, it's nice, warm, your body is soaking, cork is out, water goes out, you're lying in the empty bathtub [laughter]. And your body is in the empty bathtub. And you say "Aha! There's no water in here." That sounds like a joke, huh? [Laughter] But the point is, when you study the dharma, that's what you feel like. There's no water in here. There's no self. There's no notion of self in any of this. When you practice the dharma, then you realize that. That becomes continuous.

Study and practice go together. Study, in this case, means, as far as our weekend, our four days is concerned, to not hold back. That means take part in whatever is going on in this particular environment, in Karne Choling, this weekend. Take part in it. You can study how you eat. You can study how you talk to other people. You can study how you have discussion groups, and how you read or listen to what you've heard. You can study that. You can practice how to be, simply how to be. That's what practice is: simply how to be. That's the most generous thing you can do, at this point. Just be simply who you are, and take part in whatever

is going on. Study and practice. Study generally means contemplating, discussing, reading, you know, using the intellect in some way concerning what you have heard as a teaching. Basic study we're working on is the notion of mind, I suppose, and self.

So in this weekend, at least to begin with, you should pay some attention to what we mean by self and how to pay attention to that is two ways—practice. That is to say, when you sit and practice shamatha here—which I hope everybody will do, everybody—is just do it, thaw out. If you think, you have thoughts, that's all right, you could be generous with yourself. You don't have to be so anxious because you think. If you have bodily sensations, you don't have to be anxious about that. They are bodily sensations. If there's a car passing by or somebody knocks over a kettle or something outside, you don't have to be anxious about that. If it's hot, you don't have to be anxious about that. If it's cold, you don't have to be anxious about that. You can just be. That's a good point. So you practice that.

Well that's very generous, you see. That's a very generous thing to do. You don't have to beg, borrow, or steal. In fact, you can give something to the environment as it is. Not that the environment is asking for anything. But you could give it anyway. And when you're not sitting practicing meditation, you're talking to somebody, or you're having discussion groups, or you're relating with something or other, you can have the awareness that this is actually a practical situation. It's not simply your imagination.

So that's how to begin even talking about generosity, by the way. Generosity is referred to as the dana paramita, the first bhumi of the bodhisattva, someone who has actually dedicated his or her life to all beings. By dedicating his or her life to all beings, they experience the all-joyful state of the first bhumi, which is the paramita of generosity. That's the fruition of what we're talking about. But to begin with, we should work on what we have. We have this situation. And if we can, in a decent way, look at ourselves and each other with generosity, then we have taken a very good step, very good and solid step. We might be less anxious and less enthusiastic about our particular point of view.

Well, if you have any questions, we could have a discussion. Who's in charge here?
[Laughter] One wonders.

QUESTION: Yes. I'm wondering about how one can relate to some sort of basic intelligence that one has in the light of not being attached to one's particular point of view.

VAJRA REGENT: Well, I think the notion of generosity is also very linked to, sort of, what should we say, kind of simplicity. You know, like yellow is yellow, red is red. That's how to relate to one's intelligence. So it doesn't become “my intelligence.” It's just simply that way. That's all right.

Q: But if the same situation applied to things that at least apparently are more complex, like how one should go about doing a particular thing or, you know, should I give money to X or to Y, or something like that, which on the surface at least can seem quite complex.

VR: Well, the surface is the self, and that's the complexity. Beyond that there isn't any. That's the intelligence that we see. When we call intelligence or what we're trying to relate to as enlightened point of view, all of us, is that echo is an echo. Because we are trying to relate to it as a something which means self. **[GAP IN TAPE; WORDS MISSING]**

Generally speaking, to be open and giving, generous, means that we don't have any lack of something here or lack of something there. We can be basically free. The point there is that there's still some self consciousness involved, you see. So since there is, don't be hard on that. Accept that as part of your practice.

Q: Thank you.

QUESTION: Could you explain a little more about the relationship between shock that you were talking about and ignorance.

VR: Ignorance comes first and shock comes next. Ignorance is almost like the basic "who I am." "I am who I am" is basic ignorance. And we are shocked by that. Well, for instance [snaps fingers], that, well, there's a sudden sense of existence, right? That's because of ignorance. If you suddenly exist, did you not exist before? If you could remember your birth, let's say, when you were born, then you would say, "I exist because I know it happened on June something or other, 19 something or other." But nobody remembers that. So we're constantly seemingly in a fog about who we are, because nobody remembers. Do you remember who you are? I mean, when did you start being you? When you were born. When was that? On such and such, it says on the birth certificate. See, in this point of view, what we're saying is that that particular birth of this body is not exactly what we mean by ignorance. Ignorance is a continual thing. Birth of the body is incidental. That's an incidental thing that happened. There's ignorance going through. If you wake up, let's say you suddenly get shocked, you put your hand on the stove or something, and it goes "Ahh," suddenly, there you are. That's your birth, let's say. You exist right there, on that spot. You are who you are, and that's nothing. There is nothing there. There's just that. There's nothing there. That's Buddhist teaching. See, there's nobody. There's no so and so. But occasionally, because we are sleeping, in this world of our body, and our particular existence which is called human existence, whatever, occasionally something happens, and we think "I am." That's it. Yes, that's it. It's not complicated.

Oh, hands go up. All right [laughs].

QUESTION: Are we just mimicking generosity until we cut through that sense of ignorance?

VR: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Yes, sir, we are [laughter]. But it's not a bad mimic if you're sincere about it. Let's say sincere means honest.

Q: Well, is it the...

VR: If you're honest, it's not a bad mimic. We have to start somewhere.

Q: By practicing it over and over?

VR: Yes.

Q: Thank you.

VR: We'll talk more about that as we go along, about the actual practice of generosity. But the first thing is to get rid of this notion of self. And generosity is the sort of like antidote to self consciousness.

Q: Thank you.

VR: Yes.

Gentleman in the back?

QUESTION: How does the notion of generosity connect with ore's heart?

VR: Well, just like the thigh bone's corrected to the knee bone, and the knee bone's connected to the... [Laughter]

Q: Thank you.

VR: Precisely the same way. It's like catching fish.

QUESTION: Where does the impulse for generosity come from?

VR: Nowhere. That's the whole point. You see, generosity is not the product of our thought pattern. When we talk about generosity here, we're talking about the enlightened being, enlightened state of mind. That's where it comes from.

Q: So how do we make that happen?

VR: Well, we're talking about that. First of all, we cut through the notion of self by practicing meditation and studying the dharma. That's the beginning phase. You can't do it any other way. Practicing shamatha, mindfulness, is, first of all, realizing that you don't have to be so concerned about your trip. When we sit here, by the way, this weekend, please be generous, ladies and gentlemen, with yourselves. Don't think that you have to accomplish something. Be generous with yourselves. Just be here and do it. That's the first thing. If you talk to each other, if you talk about what's been said and what's been experienced, don't be stingy. That's the beginning. And we have a lot more to say about that, I think.

Q: I'm really happy you're here.

VR: Thank you. So am I [laughter].

QUESTION: You speak about melting the self and unfreezing it. Right now in my practice there's a sense of just that it's going on and on, and also, but that there's a cut in it somewhere. Like for a long time I practiced by taking this me and sitting it down and trying to get some sense into it by relating—

VR: Right. Yes.

Q: —and it's like I've dropped that. It's like “She can go on and run her little number, and I sit.” And it's like there's two—

VR: That's very good, yes.

Q: —things happening—

VR: Yes. That's very good. So let's—

Q: —but that's—

VR: —no, no, no, no, no—

Q: —that thing seems to be just as—

VR: No, no, no, no. Just let it be that way. You have to be slightly more generous than before, because now you want something else to happen.

Q: Could you say some more about you mean by being more generous, sir?

VR: Well, at a certain point in your practice, you will feel that you have actually settled down and don't feel so concerned about me, me, me, me. But that's simply when you practice. You get up and go out and you still think, “Well, the price of butter is too high.”

Q: Yes, right, exactly.

VR: Yes. There's another meaning that goes along there, you know, and you say “Well, they didn't relate to me, you know, and I didn't relate to them and it didn't happen, and it could have...” and you think about it and that kind of thing. I think that basically, what you need to do in your meditation practice is to relax more. Don't try to accomplish anything. Then your postmeditation experience will have much more awareness of others. If you hold your seat and your posture really good, very good, it's good, you know. Occasionally, thoughts will come in. When thoughts come in, you don't consider them to be enemies, of course. Right?

Q: Yes.

VR: So they're not enemies. They come and go, and you come back, come and go, and you come back. Well, there's another step you could take after that. And that is to think of the whole thing as not yours. The whole thing. Your life, your practice and your life—same thing. No separation inside and outside. You could practice that way in your shamatha practice. Therefore, outside, the price of butter is not such a big deal, because everybody in the world is participating in the price of butter. Isn't that something? Like oil. You know, we say, "OPEC did this," and, you know, "Amoco and all this," everybody has, you know, they read Time magazine or a newspaper and say, "Well, look what they did, look what they did," you know. But we're all doing it all the time. So it's a question of expanding your practice, your actual sitting practice a little bit. Expanding means—let's look at it this way, you're sitting practicing meditation, right, shamatha practice, regular. You are doing mindfulness. Thoughts come and go. You're not disturbed by them. They come and go. Right? Sometimes they are more, what do you call it, forceful—"Why did that happen?" Sometimes they are more forceful like that, and you wonder why that happened. So then you just sort of let it be that way. And a sort of bigger thing happens, because everybody's still hoping for the best and fearing the worst.

Q: It's okay for me to let them be that way.

VR: That's right. And more than that, it's okay for them to be that way.

Q: Okay. Then that seems like, you know, like that's ego, and that's just—it doesn't seem melted at all. It seems—

VR: Well, if you say it's okay for *me* to let them be that way, that's one part of ego. The other part is it's okay for them to be that way. That's the other part of ego. So we might cancel the whole thing out by letting it be that way. Well, you have to work on it, you know, you have to work, as you know. Yes, you have to work on it. Don't think too much.

Q: Thank you.

QUESTION: Sir, the more I think of generosity, the more the whole thing just fragments, because in a sense there is nobody giving and there's nobody receiving, and I don't even know what's being given, and I just get lost completely in that.

VR: What are you going to do?

Q: I have no idea.

VR: Well, that's probably the most generous thing you could possibly think of. At that point, you're not trying to do anything, trying to help anybody, trying to help yourself or anybody else, you have no idea, so there you are. Then something might happen.

Q: Just one other thing. As I was sitting here, trying to ponder this question and gather up the courage to ask it, I was trying to figure out why I was having such a hard time asking questions. And I think it has to do with the fact that I don't really trust myself as to why I'm asking the question. Am I asking to find out? Or am I asking because I want you to notice me?

VR: That's actually a good point, yes. That's the whole notion of me. I exist, therefore you exist, or therefore or you exist, therefore I exist, and we could play ping pong all night long [laughter] with that. Why don't we just be generous with the whole thing and say, "All right, here we are." Whatever we are or whomever we are doesn't really matter. It doesn't matter. What is important is that this environment is really true, genuine environment. It's good. Nobody could deny it.

Q: Thank you.

VR: [Inaudible: Dintzis?] Is there a mike over here?

QUESTION: This is a question, Sir, from the selfish corner. [Laughs; laughter]

VR: All right. Go ahead. I'm ready for it.

Q: Well, the question keeps nagging at me if all we're trying to do is sort of give up the notion of trying to give anything—is that correct, first of all?

VR: No, that's not correct first of all. What you're trying to give up is the notion or the fact that you are giving. Forget about the anything. See, you know, when you get up in the morning, right, and you get out of bed, so to speak, and you walk to the bathroom, so to speak, and you do what you do, so to speak, is there anything following you? [Laughter] I mean, there's somebody, is anybody following you there? [Laughter] So to speak?

Q: I don't really understand. I mean, my question is, who else cares?

VR: Who else cares?

Q: Who cares if being generous just means me giving up myself. Is that correct first of all?

VR: Does anybody else care?

Q: Yes, who else cares if I unfreeze myself?

VR: I do.

Q: Well, that's very generous of you. [Laughs; laughter]

VR: Well, it's true.

Q: But I keep feeling like what difference would it make to anybody else?

VR: I have such a temptation to sing this song to you, but I'm not going to do it [laughter] Somebody cares. By the way, why do you want to know?

Q: Maybe to find out if it's worth doing it.

VR: Maybe to find out if you exist altogether. Quite so. I think that's a valid question in some ways, because, you know, generally speaking, we think that, you know, what comes back to us—we give out, something comes back, therefore, we confirm our existence. But what we're talking about generosity is that we don't have to have anything coming back, particularly. When you get up in the morning and go to the bathroom, is anybody following?

Q: Well, I'll think about that.

VR: Yes, you do that. But not too much. Please. Especially here at Karne Choling, there might be a long line if you [much laughter] are really thinking about it—you'll have to think for a long time. It's not that beneficial.

Over here. We seem to be talking a lot.

QUESTION: How does the notion of accumulation of merit fit into the idea of not wanting to get anything back?

VR: Accumulation of merit is, first of all, from the basic hinayana point of view, not harming others by refraining from activity, activities which would lend themselves to you thinking of yourself as a self. That is to say, passion, aggression, ignorance. If you do that, then you will think of yourself as somebody or other, therefore, you will not attain enlightenment. That's the hinayana point of view. So you refrain from doing that. Passion, aggression, ignorance. Therefore, that's why people become monks and nuns, because it's most beneficial and a quick way of doing that.

Mahayana point of view is that, what we're talking about, is that accumulation of merit is not holding on to the concept of self preservation. Even from the point of view of abstaining from the passions of and aggressions of whatever they are, you know. But, holding your practice and still being part of the world. That accumulates merit from the mahayana point of view. If you hold to your practice, don't pull back from others, from the world as it is, and relate to them still with generosity, that accumulates merit. Does that make sense?

Q: I'm a little confused about what you said, actually.

VR: Well...

Q: I got, the first part of it seemed like...

VR: Well, the first part is that, you know, ordinarily speaking, when something is bad, you refrain from it. And by refraining from it, it withers and dies away. The mahayana point of view, when something is bad, you don't refrain from it in that way. You refrain from it, but not in that way, because if it withers and dies then somebody is left hanging on the vine, basically. The mahayana point of view is that you refrain from it by not indulging in it, and yet you relate to it. That's why we talked about maha—I don't know if we talked about it. Did we talk about emptiness? Oh, we didn't talk about emptiness.

Q: The bathtub, you talked about the bathtub.

VR: Well, we talked about the bathtub, that's it. Ah, well, we'll talk about that tomorrow. Yes. Talk about that tomorrow. Yes, that's a good point. That's a good point, yes.

Gentleman, the bearded gentleman behind you. Oh, there are two bearded gentlemen. The one behind you, the Fu Manchu one. Then Fu Manchu two. Sir.

QUESTION: In which way is generosity linked with emotion, if at all.

VR: Generosity is linked with emotion in terms of passion. That is to say, you want something. In this case, generosity is you want it for others, rather than for yourself.

Gentleman in front of you.

QUESTION: What seems to make the dharma the dharma rather than a philosophy is what you mentioned before about the notion of something being its own proof. I find it a lot easier to understand how sitting can be its own proof without necessarily having a philosophy to lean on. How does the study present its own proof?

VR: It confirms itself through the practice.

Q: So the practice which seems to confirm itself somehow, almost without study...

VR: Nay, nay, nay.

Q: No?

VR: No way. Absolutely no way. Then you would become like a blah, blah, blah. Duh duh duh duh. [Laughter] Then you say, "Well, all you have to do is practice. You don't have to think about any of these things. Just practice. Don't think about anything." Doesn't happen that way. You do think. And we have intellect, you know. That's part of the mind, so to speak.

Q: And then what's the relation of generosity to that, the notion of its own proof.

VR: Well, the notion of generosity's own proof is that it speaks for itself. It doesn't beg, borrow, or steal. It speaks for itself. That's its own proof. That's the most generous, you know, statement anybody could make.

Q: Thank you.

VR: You're welcome. Ladies and gentlemen, what do you think—is it important?

Q [check tape]: Yes.

VR: Then all right! [Laughs] Let's see. [Laughter; laughs]

QUESTION: Sir, I'd like to know what you meant when you said that the creation of self was not an event in time distinguishable from another event in time.

VR: That's what I meant. Do you mean what do I mean by that?

Q: Yes, sir.

VR: Oh that's testy. [Laughs] Well, let's say that ordinarily speaking, that you and I are talking to each other and that's an event in time, so to speak, but basically we'd have no idea about each other, about the microphone you're holding, or the one I am speaking into, we have no idea what's behind us, what's below us, what's above us and around us. There's sort of this vague suspicion that we exist. But simply because the sound of my voice is making an impression on your ears doesn't simply doesn't mean that something's happening.

Q: So there's nothing underneath.

VR: Right.

Q: Right. What does that have to do with events in time?

VR: Well, that's precisely the description of time that I would like to give. Time is a continuous event. It doesn't have a particular origin. You asked me a question. Do you remember?

Q: Yes.

VR: How long ago was that?

Q: Hard to say.

VR: Really. How long ago was this?

Q: So there's nothing underneath time, either.

VR: I don't think so. I think it's kind of like this sort of [inaudible: bully, bully belly wash?] thing that people would like to believe in order to think that they are real.

Q: Right. Thank you.

VR: Well, this is just my point of view.

Q: Thank you very much.

VR: I wouldn't go on that, by the way. That's not a Buddhist point of view.

Q: Well, it's the way I—

VR: Well, it's sort of a Buddhist point of view. I'm talking about the language, so you don't get you know, you don't get hung up on the language. From Buddhist point of view, time originates with mind, mind is unoriginated.

Q: Right. This is the emptiness of time, right?

VR: Well, emptiness of time, emptiness of self—it's the same thing.

Q: The past and the future.

VR: Same thing, yes.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

VR: Well, I mean, I was just trying to see how you relate to that. Because we all relate to it different ways, you know. Some people, if you say that, they would grasp on real quickly and say, "Well, what do you mean by that?" We could get very direct about these things. We have to be generous with ourselves so as not to pump up some kind of meaning about it. Time. Oh boy. [Laughs] That's interesting. Time.

So is that it? That is it. Okay, good. Time's up. [Laughter]

Well, I'd like to request that those of you who have done so, those of you who are about to do so, practice meditation. From my experience, if I might say—this is not a confession, this is just simply what it is—my experience [is] that the practice of meditation is continuous. It's not based on what level you have achieved, where you started from, or where you wound up, or where you are right now. The practice of meditation is a continuous sense of being. Continuous time, so to speak. Continuous time. Doesn't have a beginning, middle, and end. It's just now, basic sense of now, being. You should practice accordingly this weekend, which is a somewhat generous point of view. We should have that point of view. We don't have to worry about what happened before, what will happen, or what's happening now. But we take the whole thing as one thing. One thing. Just as it is. So that's our practice. That's what we do. And it might be a very generous thing to do in terms of this little gadfly we talk about called self. Well, thank you very much for your generosity, for being awake.