

Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin

The Jewel Ornament of Liberation

Talk 5 of 8: Soft Spot

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Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin: Because we seek for some kind of permanent pleasure and avoid pain, we have understood the mechanism of karma, creating a world of delusion. So our response basically is to get out of that, seek some kind of spiritual discipline in which we could get out of that mess which, through our study and our experience, has proved itself to be a mess. So we would like to get out of that. This is the attitude of the ordinary practitioner who has never come in contact yet with mahayana teaching, but feels that samsara is a dirty world, dirty place. The only thing to do is to rid ourselves of that mess, that dirty stuff, seek some discipline which will provide us with a sense of peace and absence of pain. That is what is done by the hinayanist, which is aversion to samsara and attraction to nirvana. And the practice is tremendously difficult, and the discipline very hard, and through such tremendous effort we can achieve nirvana or the absence of struggle, the attainment of peace. Tremendous effort. In talking about hinayana, let's not pooh-pooh anything here. Let's not think that we belong to some superior yana just because of signing your name to a membership card. Tremendous discipline and effort. Achievement of peace, nirvana.

But Gampopa says that this is not true enlightenment, but rather this is clinging to peace as something permanent. He says basically that this is not a real honest-to-goodness true thing, but rather there is still some subtle sense of security, a subtle sense of holding on, subtle sense of securing territory.

Even at the level of pratyekabuddha who has accomplished so much, Gampopa says that this is not true enlightenment. But this actually sows the seed for further karma. Why so? We are still holding some territory for ourselves. Maybe it's a flimsy one, maybe it's an insubstantial one. Quite possibly it doesn't have any ego of self, but we're holding onto that as permanent. We cannot substitute our toys for supertoys. We cannot substitute pain for peace. This is still ego's territory, still in the realm of our own wishful thinking. How are we going to undo that sense of trying to renounce?

This is what happens. We feel some sense of sanity, we practice the discipline, we feel better some sense of sanity and some sense of wanting to preserve that sanity because everything else is confused, and we have latched onto just one aspect, one state of mind which is not confused. Peace, very peaceful. We don't want to damage that. We would like to retreat, pull back, be in the company of those people who meditate, stay with meditators, stay in an environment which has no confusion, lead the simple life, renounce the ugliness of samsara. Attraction to nirvana,

aversion to samsara, we can achieve that. But Gampopa says, “Be careful of that. That is not the real enlightenment of the Buddha. It is temporary, temporary experience.”

What should we do about that? Well, the remedy that’s the word in the text the remedy for clinging to peace, for holding onto some peaceful state of mind, is the development of benevolence and compassion. Benevolence is called maitri, Sanskrit, m-a-i-t-r-i, lovingkindness and compassion. That’s what we should do. I order not to get stuck in an ego-centered version of enlightenment, we should develop lovingkindness and compassion. So before we get too confused about that and hopeful, trippy, about those words, they do not refer to some notion of dropping off your garbage from a tenement window on somebody else’s head. They don’t refer to getting rid of your own guilt feelings on somebody else. We can’t manufacture those things, create some kind of spiritual do-gooder who is kind, loving, gentle, compassionate, and radiates peace. The text says the remedy for self-complacency is the development of benevolence and compassion. And I think self-complacency, we should get more detailed than that. Self-complacency has some idea of some smug little somebody who feels good. But what we’re talking about is the achievement of nirvana in the hinayana way, which is no small number. We have to have proper understanding of hinayana discipline in order to even approach benevolence, kindness, or compassion.

We talked about from the beginning that a sense of panic creates a sense of separateness, panic, separateness, holding on, creating some sense of individuality, some sense of solidity of oneself. And the remedy, the way to cut through that dualistic notion, to begin with, is the sitting practice of meditation, which we call shamatha meditation and vipashyana meditation, which you’ve heard about. And the point there is to see things as they are without preconceptions, to actually deal very directly with the five senses. And in buddhism we call six senses, five obvious ones and the sixth is the mind which organizes the other five. Just actually hear, taste, smell, simply like that without interpretation, without opinion, and without any vested interest. In practicing the meditation techniques of shamatha and vipashyana, it is possible to cut through dualistic notions. It is possible to see things directly, clearly, as they are, without filter, very simply. Why do so? As we said, because that sense of panic produces the formation of the elements of consciousness and the seeming solidity of some kind of individual self happens so fast, so quickly, that we have lost any sense of unobstructed intelligence without identity, just intelligence without identity. Suddenly without warning, we become somebody, very fast. The practice of meditation is aimed at separating, unravelling those elements which form a consciousness, which form the consciousness of an individual entity, so-and-so, whatever you want to call yourself, whatever you have been called. It’s the only way to do it, absolutely the only way. There is no other way. Sit down. Be as you are.

You could say that meditation is the attitude of neutrality, but you’re not talking sides particularly whether the ego is good or bad, but simply see how it works. How does it work? Doing so, it is possible to cut through and realize some sense of insubstantial quality of yourself your thought patterns rather, the same thing as yourself and your world. But the problem in doing so is we might get some sort of sense of pride, that we’ve developed sanity; therefore, we should steal ourselves away to the great monastery, the castle of peace, and hold onto nonego. Yeah, hold onto nonego. This is not simply theoretical blah-blah-blah. This happens to everybody. As soon as you feel better, you think, “Well, that’s enough. I’ll just take my little bag with my few books and my trinkets, whatever they are, and go to a nice corner and be by myself.” We must be careful of that. That’s called spiritual materialism, not in the gross sense.

Look, we're not talking about getting blissed-out on so-and-so's talk and, you know, feeling the devas running around our heads and being propelled home automatically because we're on the right track, you know. That kind of bullshit, we're not talking about that.

We're talking about people who actually work hard not work hard on indulging in their fantasies, but work hard on practicing shamatha and vipashyana, who practice nontheistic tradition. It's very curious that some people actually think that buddhists are atheists and some people think that buddhists are theists. That's cute. Anyway, we're not talking about that kind of wishful thinking and silly stuff. We're talking about somebody who has actually worked very hard but gets stuck in the sense of their own peace. Peace isn't even the word; let's just say a sense of their own well-being. And I don't think there's anybody here tonight who hasn't actually experienced that, actually hasn't experienced that, that you've got it together. And a lot of you have tried to protect it. Any kind of protection, any kind of preservation whatsoever is ego-clinging and must be cut through, whether it's protection of spiritual experience or protection of any other kind of well-being.

Any other kind of delusion that you think you have achieved something must be cut through. How to do so? Develop maitri, lovingkindness. We're supposed to contemplate this, lovingkindness and compassion both, and develop those attitudes. Now being really sharp cookies, we know that we can't just say, "Okay, I'm going to be loving and kind tomorrow, and I'm going to be compassionate and I'm just going to produce that thought form." [Laughter] I take it that you don't believe that sort of thing, which makes it more interesting for me. If you did, I would probably be standing up at a podium reading a speech. You can't invent loving kindness, but it actually happens to the experience of sitting practice of meditation. What happens? You begin to see the insubstantial quality of your own thought forms, your own body, your own relationships, the whole thing becomes rather transparent, so much so that you can't say, "I know."

When you begin practice, and when I say begin practice I'm not talking about two weeks or five weeks at Naropa Institute. I'm talking about somebody who's worked hard to straighten out their messed-up head, put the brains back. You go further and you never can say, "I know." You would like to say, "I feel, therefore I am," [laughter] but you wouldn't even say that. Lovingkindness, maitri, what does that mean? That means somehow by continuing the practice, we begin to feel, we begin to see that we've been very harsh, extremely harsh with ourselves and putting ourselves down, so to speak. Very critical, extremely critical. When we don't do it right, we're bad practitioners. When we do it right, we're not good enough.

Well, the point is that we have to start to understand that buddha nature, tathagatagarbha as we talked about, is not simply peace, but it is that which encompasses both confusion and enlightenment. If you possess buddha nature then it is possible for you to encompass both confusion and peace at the same time. That means that your negative junk, garbage, is not going to be thrown out of the tenement window onto somebody else's head, but you actually include it in with your wonderful positive spiritual stuff, that lovingkindness starts with yourself. It means that you're able to accept both sides of the coin, able to include both sides of the coin of being wretched and begin Buddha. And you have to start doing that. If you can do that with yourself, if you can encompass both the negative and positive qualities without taking sides, that's the basic point, taking sides. That we say, "This is the best one; the other one's lousy one," or we switch round. It doesn't matter which is the evil or which is the good, it depends on our mood, we take sides with one or the other.

But the point is, through sitting practice this particular kind of gentleness begins to develop because you see the transparency of both, the good and the bad one, so you stop taking sides. This is the beginning of generosity, of real sense of the energy and inspiration of the Buddha, that you can actually include both. This is a fantastic spring, underground spring of Buddha, of the awakened quality in us, that we begin to feel that we can actually include both the junk and works of art [laughs], junk and works of art, without making a distinction of which is which [laughs]. In other words, we don't have to say, "This is my work of art and this is my junk [laughter]. This one didn't work; it's terrible; get rid of it, you know [laughter]. Burn it; it's ugly. But look at this one. This is a real good one I did." [Laughter]

Kindness to yourself, lovingkindness, maitri to yourself first before you start spitting off a lot of things to other human beings, that you can include both your horror movie film and your love story. How can you do that? Well, you have a lot of space to do that because of hinayana foundation, because you practiced the hinayana and practiced with great discipline and practiced isolation of the components of what makes a who, who you are, and realized that it's simply a matter of separate isolated events that go together very fast to make us think who we are, but we actually can separate those out. Therefore we feel the sense that we can relax somewhat.

Loving kindness or maitri has been compared in the text to the feeling of a mother toward her child. I'm sure you read that. And in the sense of mother toward her child, it's very important, extremely important that we understand what Gampopa's talking about. He doesn't particularly mean that we should go around holding everybody in our arms and rocking, but that maitri has that quality of real gentleness and real nurturing. Mamma wouldn't let us go even if she was a really rotten mamma. You know, later on we didn't think she was so good at all. But when we couldn't talk, couldn't eat by ourselves, couldn't walk, couldn't live without a mother, she was there. She included the changing of the diapers and the smile of the baby. Both were included in her life; she took it all in. That's the feeling of maitri. Mother to her child. No matter what the possessiveness or the neurosis later on, when a baby is there, Mamma says, "Oh, my sweet little darling, my baby, my only one." What is that?

Even as Gampopa says, "Wild vicious beasts, when it comes to their own cubs, children, lick them, take care of them." Though they may be ferocious and destructive, when it comes to their own children, they lick them, nurse them, nourish them. What is that? That is buddha nature and the beginning of real generosity. There's no way to deny that, that you're here because of your mamma and no other reason. Doesn't matter who the mamma was particularly, somebody took care of you. What is that? What is that? That is some sense of the soft spot in us. Soft spot. No matter how much our teeth have grown fangs, and our nasty habits about each other [laughter], we still have a soft spot. Maybe it's ice cream [laughter]. Maybe it's just our intense devotion to ferns [laughter]. It doesn't matter. You see, it doesn't matter. There's some soft spot, some gentleness, real gentleness. Even a big huge beast has gentleness towards its own.

And the point here, I suppose, we're coming to ever so slowly [laughter] is that it's owned is the key point, compassion.

Compassion is not quite like maitri of lovingkindness. It's a little different than that. We're not only asked to develop maitri, but we're asked to develop compassion, karuna. Compassion is different. Compassion is tough and warm. You see, maitri starts with ourselves and starts to extend outwards. When it begins to extend outward, it becomes compassion. But compassion is tough and warm at

the same time. How come tough? Tough because we have realized that the essence and beginning and basic nature of all things and all people, all beings and whatever exists in our world, is shunya, empty, has no real substance, has nothing to cling to. Tough because there's nothing to cling to. If we can't cling to something, then what do we have left? We have no personal territory left. We have space which is undifferentiated unobstructed space. Nothing to cling to. Absence of clinging is shunyata. And the basis of compassion is shunyata. Why warm, then? Why is it warm? Once you have realized the essence of all beings, beginning and end, middle of all beings, is shunyata, shunya, that means that you have to personal territory.

If you have no personal territory, then you automatically see, spontaneously see suffering in other people, other beings. And you have tremendous sense of warmth arising from that, because you realize that it's unnecessary. Unnecessary for being to suffer in this world, when this world is a fabrication and mish-mash of our confusion and our self-centered ideas and personal territories and personal zafus. This is how the mahayana teacher instructs the student to get to the basic fact and cut through the twofold veil and actually penetrate basic ignorance. Warm, increasingly warm, the little soft spot of maitri becomes a throbbing beating heart of compassion.

Not compassion in the sense of the idiot, as we know. Many of us are familiar with that term, idiot compassion, meaning a do-goody because I want to get rid of my own baddy. Not that as we said. But because there is a sense of space, spaciousness, tremendous space, and nothing to hide, nothing to run from, nothing to manipulate, you can be just as you are. Compassion, which allow intelligence to be as it is, that's the same thing as saying being as you are. Being as you are doesn't mean any particular you, Tom, Dick, or Harry or Joan, not to be chauvinistic, Jane, Arlene now we got three and three, it's okay [laughter]. Intelligence unobstructed because there is no sense of personal territory, and warm because what else? What's there to protect? The natural sense of radiation outward to people who you see, you work with, you are with every day, who think that there's something happening for themselves.

But let's not get any self-righteous ideas here. You can't push that down anybody's throat. "So, okay, I understand that you are confused. I see that you cling to something. Don't you realize that you don't have to do that?" That's what's called aggression.

That's why we need a spiritual friend to instruct us on how to continue on the path, to achieve the enlightenment of the Buddha. And that instruction begins with taking refuge in the Buddha, dharma, and sangha, taking refuge in the three jewels, as is said, the triple gem. And this taking refuge which is instructed in the mahayana way is not some sense of insuring any kind of security as ordinary refuge might seem, taking refuge meaning that I'm going to have some kind of shelter, some kind of umbrella. But taking refuge here means actually that you have the conviction to let go, give in, give up the notion of your personal refuge, personal security. Taking refuge is generally understood to be finding something better than oneself, greater, bigger thing, huge thing, greater spiritual awareness. But not so here. A buddhist taking refuge means that you forego any of that, especially from the mahayana point of view. You let go any of that. That what you're actually going to do is take refuge in not having any roof over your head in terms of ego security at all. This is the instruction of the spiritual friend: take refuge in the Buddha, dharma, and sangha. Taking refuge in the Buddha as example, taking refuge in the dharma as path, taking refuge in the sangha as companions on the path. It is said in the text that taking refuge in the sangha and dharma is what the hinayanists do. What it means there is that they don't believe that they can attain the

enlightenment of the Buddha, so therefore they take refuge in the Buddha's teaching and practice diligently with the companionship of the sangha, which generally means to the hinayana monks and nuns. And this is said to be the refuge of the hinayana.

But the refuge of the mahayana is said to be the Buddha. Why so? Because the Buddha would not cop out and would not give in to ego's tendencies until he had attained perfect complete enlightenment. Not only that. The Buddha as example meaning even though he had attained perfect enlightenment, he would continually work throughout his life without the sense of personal comfort, without the sense of his own private space, for the benefit of anybody who came in contact with him. And that is said to be the refuge of the mahayana. The most excellent refuge of the mahayana is the Buddha. One is striving for enlightenment; two, not for the sake of oneself. Taking refuge means that taking refuge in the Buddha in the mahayanist way means three things: first, that a human being like ourselves has done so, has actually achieved great enlightenment which is beyond samsara and nirvana; and second, that he has worked and given completely of his life to sentient beings without distinction; and third, that he has encouraged all of us to do the same. This taking refuge is beginning to cut through, undo, the last obstacle which is ignorance of the means of attaining buddhahood.

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

## QUESTIONS

Question: Maybe you answered the question in this last part. But something I was thinking about today I think applies to tonight's talk. In the refuge vows and then the bodhisattva, there's this very curious thing where it more or less says that in keeping that vow you should not disparage the hinayana ...

Vajra Regent: That's right.

Q: And you should not hang out with the hinayana.

VR: That's right. You're right on both counts.

Q: Yeah. Maybe you could unravel that.

VR: Yeah, sure. We should not disparage the hinayana means that without the hinayana discipline there is no way that we can actually ... Hinayana discipline means simply, well, it means two things. One is shamatha-vipashyana meditation. The other is called pratimoksha, soso-tharpa in Tibetan, which is in the text, of not causing harm to others, which is the sense of drawing in and not getting confused in a complicated life. But it's more complicated than that. Seven precepts and four and eight and whatever. Yeah. One should not disparage that, because without that there is no possible way to see the insubstantial quality of oneself and one's world. On the other hand, one should not—what was the other word?

Q: Hang out.

VR: Hang out in that state of mind, because that fosters some additional sense of security, of having achieved that. Therefore it is necessary to get into the mahayana soup, which is slightly schmaltzy but it has as its basic fire the discipline of nonego. Without that discipline of nonego, you can't throw such things as kindness and compassion into the pot. If you do, they don't come out smelling very good; they come out smelling like the missionaries who went to wherever [laughter].

Over here. Stick your hand up in the air. That's it. What's the matter? You got arm trouble?  
[Laughter]

Q: Arthritis.

VR: Yeah. Arthritis is bad, yeah?

Q: Yeah. I read last night in Rinpoche's writings that if you mix shunyata with ego, you have rudra. What does that mean?

VR: Well, it means, if you say to yourself, "I am empty ..."

Q: Yeah.

VR: Yeah! That's it [laughter]

Q: [Laughs] What's the remedy?

VR: Alka-Seltzer [laughter]. I'm sorry too cute. The remedy [laughs] is the practice of shamatha-vipashyana, uh-huh, take the refuge vow that's as far as we got so far. I'm going to go along with the remedies of Gampopa up to this point. Shunyata with the ego is already been cut through by doing what we have done so far. Do you understand?

Q: Yeah.

VR: By realizing impermanence, suffering, karma, by meeting the spiritual friend, by taking the refuge vow. There can be no rudra there if you stick with it. If you deny the spiritual friend, you see, at this point by saying, "I got it together myself," then you might be mixing shunyata with ego and you say that "I am empty."

Q: I wouldn't do that.

VR: Please don't [laughter]. Or else the street doesn't flop [laughs]. Over here. Yeah.

Q: Would you please say what you mean by intelligence?

VR: Intolerance?

Q: Intelligence.

VR: Intelligence. Well, no. No. I mean, I could say a lot of things, but I think we'll leave it up to you for now. Later on we'll get into those things more clearly in terms of the paramitas and in terms of prajna. But intelligence is not and is blah-blah-blah.

Q: Thank you [laughter].

VR: Anyway, it doesn't mean a high I.Q.

Q: Thank you.

VR: You're welcome.

Q: I was going to ask about the relationship between the maitri techniques and the development of maitri. What is their function and importance?

VR: Maitri techniques? You mean considering everybody as your mother?

Q: No. I'm talking about the postures and the rooms.

VR: That's not the same thing.

Q: Okay.

VR: That's more complicated.

Q: And they don't really bear any relationship to each other at this point?

VR: Well, come on! That's like saying ... Come on, come on! [Laughs] You can't ask me that kind of question [laughter]. I refuse, absolutely refuse. If I say nothing, that doesn't bear any relationship to anything else, then I've been bull-shitting since square one [laughs]. The whole path is not simply a point-counterpoint or simply the next page in a cartoon. Everything bears resemblance. But the question of basic intelligence that our friend brought up there is a matter of sorting out for yourself.

In terms of the Maitri community you're talking about in Connecticut and the maitri postures which we teach at Naropa Institute—do we teach them at Naropa Institute any more? We do? Okay that is not the same thing as what we're talking about in terms of Gampopa's study of the mahayana. It's not the same thing. But on the other hand, if you can make friends with yourself through those postures, then it's exactly the same thing. Does that make sense?

Q: Yes.

VR: Do you see what I mean? You can't say, if you say that particular techniques, which we call the maitri postures, and "maitri" or "lovingkindness, benevolence" as Guenther translates, Dr. Guenther translates as the same thing, I would say, "No, it's not the same thing," in terms of technique. But in terms of effect, same thing. Make friends with yourself. Include both ugly and beautiful, means maitri. Come on, Billy. Do you have something else?

Q: No, I was just wondering where the maitri postures and techniques ...

VR: Came from?

Q: Well, what sort of effort we should be putting into them or attention we should be paying them.

VR: Well, if you're taking them as a course, I would put all the effort possible. Same with any course you're taking here at Naropa. You should use whatever energy you think you possess.

Q: But the techniques don't seem to be central to our practice at this point.

VR: Oh, but they definitely do. Central to our practice at this point, this class, this time, this meeting with all of us, is making friends with ourselves.

Q: Through whatever technique?

VR: Well, you're taking about a particular technique. I'm not talking about through whatever technique. You're talking about that one. I'm talking about the issue or the point or the question or the teaching or whatever you want to say, blah-blah-blah, is to make friends with oneself and somehow pull out the air plugs. You know, when things get too filled with water or air or whatever, they start to bloat and they cause pain on all sides. And that pain on all sides could be construed to be bliss.

Q: Would you say ...

VR: Who say? Oh, hello there.



Q: Hello.

VR: What I say?

Q: Would you say a little bit more about relating with all beings as one would relate with one's mother?

VR: Well, what we're talking about in terms of maitri is a quality rather than looking at everybody and saying, "Hello, Mom." [Laughter] Right? You got that part, I'm sure. Yeah, yeah. But what we're talking about is a sense of gentleness in remembering—somehow contemplating it—what is said in the text, contemplating on how such a mother treated you when you were just a little helpless whatever. Therefore since you yourself have discovered, uncovered the fact of insubstantiality of any sense of solidity or ego, then you too must feel that gentleness toward others who feel stuck, same as mamma would do, without the possessiveness. Do you see what I mean? It's very simple. People make a lot of hoo-ha about Gampopa talking about mother for some three or four pages, but it's really quite valid.

The same attitude, the same sense of psychological approach as you would take to somebody stuck in samsara, in sense of solidness, when you are not, is the beginning of the mahayana. If you are a hinayanist, you would say, "That's your problem, and I can never solve the problem of the world, because the only way to solve the problem of the world is to get ye hence to the monastery and sit in your cell, and therefore I will solve at least this one aspect of the problem." But the mahayanists are sort of socialists in that way, but kind of crazy socialists [laughter], because they don't want anything in return particularly. They don't want to see a better government or anything like that. They just don't give a shit about themselves in terms of their territory so they can actually afford to look at things as a mother would look at her child even though they're a grown idiot [laughter].

Q: Sometimes it might be best just to give the child space.

VR: Give the child space? Well, that's what we're taking about. How do you suppose you give the child space? By letting it cry and die? [Laughter] By letting it choke on a bobby-pin? [Laughter] No. Yeah, well that's what I'm talking about. What are you talking about?

Q: I was thinking more in the sense of hands off, sometimes just giving the child ...

VR: Oh, Mother would never say hands off. Come on! Mother wouldn't let the shit pile up in the diaper, would it? [Laughter] Mother would change it.

Q: Yeah.

VR: Yeah. Because there's diaper rash [laughter] which could get very irritating. So forget that hand-off nonsense of hinayanist security. You got to get your hands in the shit [laughter] in the mahayana, I mean, to be quaint about the whole thing [laughter].

Q: Okay.

VR: Well, okay. But then again we shouldn't get too far, you know. We start rubbing our hands in the whole thing and making it become a substance and thinking, "Well, this is the real substance." That becomes a tirthika point of view. Tirthika? Somebody?

Q: Heretic.

VR: Hm? Heretic. Tirthika means believer in substance. We don't want to get the hands in the

diaper and just start worshipping that particularly. Could get in trouble.

Q: Could you say a little something about our own expectations in terms of working with other beings?

VR: Could I say something about our own expectations?

Q: The practitioner's tripping over his own or her own expectations.

VR: Sure, yeah. I suppose that basically if you're uninitiated in the disciplines of the hinayana and if you have not met a spiritual friend and begin to practice the mahayana, then you'll be a perfect asshole [laughter] about the mahayana. That's what I could say about that. And I'm very strict. I'm a fundamentalists buddhist [laughter]. Absolutely. You could tell by my cigarette [laughter]. If you don't follow the path, and follow doesn't mean like you've got a clothespin on your nose, and somebody goes along. I think we've gone over that in the first four talks. Follow the path means follow the natural intelligence which is shedding ego as it goes along. Then you don't have to worry about any kind of nonsense of trying to deliver cookies to the Naropa dorms to make people feel better [laughter]. In fact, if you're a real bodhisattva, you would deliver the pledge forms [laughter] and get the money to make Naropa continue, which is the only place on the face of this particular continent where such audacious and outrageous things have been said: that we could actually live together as sane human beings. I would like to find another place. If there is one, let me know. I could go there for a few weeks [laughter].

Q: Yeah, the last point you made in the last part of talk I didn't quite catch. It was that the refuge in the Buddha is the key refuge for the mahayanist because the Buddha demonstrates the possibility of the complete path or complete enlightenment, some ...

VR: Buddha didn't what?

Q: That the refuge in the Buddha as the most excellent refuge for the mahayanist is for what reason?

VR: Yeah. What did I say?

Q: I can't remember.

VR: Because the Buddha would not give in to ego's territory until the last round, and then in the last round Buddha wouldn't give in. Even if it was Mohammed Ali [laughter], daughters of mara [Inaudible], any particular kind of subtle temptation of absolute spiritual bliss, Buddha said, "Not quite so."

Q: Would you say something more about the neutral attitude toward our horror story and our love story?

VR: Hm. I forgot the story, horror story, love story. Neutral attitude is simply neutral attitude that, "I'm not taking any part in this."

Q: It seems like it could ...

VR: You know. "Let them fight it out. It's not my business." [Laughter]

Q: It seems like sometimes it can get so big and so overblown, we need to do something, you know.

VR: You should do something? What?

Q: Yeah, it feels that way.

VR: Continually. That's why you have to have some sort of discipline in training your mind, because that's the impulse and seduction of ego, that when the forces of good and bad become so overwhelming, fantastic Star Wars [laughter], that we should take sides. The other alternative is "Eh, just them. I have nothing to do with that." Yeah, ignorance. What did you call it? Ignoring?

Q: No, I didn't call it that.

VR: Well, something like that, you know.

Q: Neutral.

VR: Yeah. Neutral. Ignoring. Ignoring those two warring factions. It's not our business. Just, they're warring with each other and it's their problem.

Q: One reason I was asking is somewhere Milarepa says, you know, when it gets to a certain point, you just can't sit there anymore, you've got to do something.

VR: Which point are you talking about?

Q: The point of just being neutral, you know, like ...

VR: What song? Are you talking about a particular song?

Q: I don't ...

VR: It's very difficult to quote Milarepa out of context. Let's not, he's too much of a real person to do that. You don't quote him out of context particularly. He knows what he's saying, every word. So if we get the right word then we'll talk about it, what exactly he said.

Q: Can you hear me?

VR: No.

Q: Could you perhaps say more about the toughness of karuna?

VR: Yeah. Because it's not based upon any kind of sentimentality at all. Compassion is not based on sentimentality. That's why it's not idiot compassion. It's not based on the sense of "Oh, I'm just like you, human being. I suffer, and therefore I feel bad about you because you suffer." No dice. That's not it, That's complete crap. Or it's not based on the sentimentality of "If I help all these human beings, how much good God will give to me, because he'll know. He's bound to know. How could he not know that I helped all these human beings, and therefore my reward will be greater." That's what I mean by tough. It doesn't have anything to do with all that. Who cares about that? Since there's nothing here, there's nothing there. Therefore, we act simply out of generosity because there's no point in which we can say, "I stop here."

And I think I should make a point of stopping here [laughter]. Good night.