

Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin

Kindling the Flame of Enlightenment ITS

Talk 3 of 4: Making Friends with Self and Other

Karmê Chöling

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Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin: The discovery of tathagatagarba as buddha-nature already in us is at once inspiring and frightening. Inspiring is obvious; frightening is more delicate. It is easy to latch onto positive thinking as a means to increase positive thinking. But in terms of tathagatagarba we have two aspects of inspiration and journey. Inspiration is some sense of solid intelligence, some sense of ongoing intelligence in our own life, our own being. And journey is a sense of being frightened, that perhaps it is not so; perhaps it is a joke; perhaps it is a hoax of some kind. That the whole teaching of tathagatagarba and discovery of tathagatagarba is a mistake, some sort of a trap. But if we understand it properly then we realize that journey is working with a mistake. Working with intelligence doesn't seem to involve anything at all, but working with mistake involves path. So having some sort of conviction of buddha-nature in us is not enough. But the question comes up is how do we proceed? So we come to the discussion of other. And those two aspects are the same as the self and other. First being intelligence recognized in ourselves and other as journey. It doesn't matter whether we feel all that confident in ourselves after all. We still feel lacking and hesitant about proceeding, which is the sense of other. So working with this sense of other is the beginning of discovery of compassion, which permeates the bodhisattva path, is a very basic fibre of the bodhisattva path—compassion. It's working with other. And we have some sense of conviction already having taken the bodhisattva vow, some sense of intention to go, to work with others.

So we need some proper instruction on how to do so. And the first instruction is called development of maitri or loving-kindness, which begins with kindness towards oneself. And oneself in this case is considered relative aspect of things. Relative in the sense that making friends with oneself involves making friends with your projections of the world outside, so-called world outside. Relative situation means your mother, father, sister, brother. [laughter] So it's double-edged; it's literal, and it's also indicating the rest of our environment as well. To start off with we have to understand that our making friends with ourselves means making friends with our interpretations, our relationships, which are purely in the sense of our version of things. When you talk about your mother, your father, your sister and your brother, you're talking about your version of mother, your sister, father or brother. And that's why relatives are very good examples of making friends with oneself. It seems for most people the hardest thing to do is to make friends with their mother and father. And sister and brother and so on down the line, in terms of intensity. But it's a very difficult thing to do from beginningless time. It's not a current phenomena. Because so much of

our interpretation is involved with our family. So much of our version of things is involved with our family.

So what we're talking about is total relative point of view. In other words, we project the notion of ourselves onto the world and it comes back at us. So the point of developing maitri, loving-kindness, is to make friends with our own projections, rather than actually making friends with other as such, making friends with our own projection of other.

So we have to have some sense of a beginning on the path of compassion, which is that we can allow our relatives into our situation. In other words, our relatives are very personal, extremely personal to us and causes great difficulty because it's so near, so dear, so close, such an intense emotion, such intense memory that we have to begin to allow those projections to come back without obstruction. Making friends with yourself, or the development of maitri, is the sense of enough space to allow negative and positive, the good experiences and the bad experiences. This is accomplished through sitting meditation practice, but when we talk about development of compassion on the bodhisattva path we are also talking about meditation in action, in other words our relationships in the world.

So we can't simply think that we can confine ourselves to sitting practice alone and therefore develop compassion. What happens simply is if we try and do that we fall into self-centered experience of peace with ourselves, but as soon as we come into a relative situation, that is threatened. Situation of this and that, myself and other.

So in order to work directly with that sense of protecting oneself we include other. At this point what we're talking about is including our imagination, our neurotic thoughts as other, our value judgments, our opinions, our classifications and so on, as other. Which is extremely important step. It's a kernel—key to the entire path of the bodhisattva. How to do that is based on one's practice of sitting meditation in seeing the insubstantial quality of thoughts and situations, therefore feeling a sense of spaciousness and a sense of no-big-deal about oneself.

So the problems we encounter with others are very easily allowed in, from the point of view is they're not going to destroy us as such because there's nothing there to be destroyed. But there is still some sense of question about what's going on there with this relationship business. So in order to work concretely with a sense of confidence of going forward it is necessary to allow our projections to come back to us, have the room to present themselves in their most horrific, most beautiful, whatever, proportions. And this is—in the case of our family, our enemies, our friends, at this point it's all the same. They're all our relations. At this point all our experience is family, whether they are enemy, friend, relative, mother, father, sister, brother, wife. It's part of our family of relationship. So we endeavor to allow those experiences to come back without trying to manipulate them in any way, without trying to change your mother into a version of yourself, even though mother would like to change you into a version of herself.

Even so, the practice at this point is to allow mother to go ahead and do it. It's very straightforward. What we're simply working with is ourselves in any case. Even though mother tries very hard, even though we allow mother to try very hard, we're working with ourselves. So that kind of sense of spaciousness, a sense of enemy and friend being welcome is the beginning, entrance to the practice of compassion, or the development of compassion we should say, on the bodhisattva path.

But, even allowing negativity in terms of our relationships to enter in and to give spacious situation

to negativity is not enough. Once we become pacified at home so to speak, that we can actually go home to mother and mother may rant and rave and still we say, “I love you mother anyway,” or you don’t even say “anyway”. you wouldn’t do that, no. Just say, “I love you mother. It’s so nice to be here with you.” And she say “Well how come you’re not making enough money?”, and all the rest of it, and “How are the children?”, you know, and “Are you providing?”, and whatever mother says. Even though you have pacified that situation and feel at home, that is not enough, because still we’re dealing with our version of things. We’re not actually dealing with other as such, but it’s good vehicle and perfect way in, so to speak, to deal with other.

Dealing with other is the development of a relationship with the kalyanamitra, or the spiritual friend. That is the most basic situation of other that can possibly happen in our lives. Kalyanamitra, spiritual friend, is the first and only experience of pure other that we can have.

When we talk about other we’re talking about some sense of attraction, some sense of yearning, some sense of expansiveness which happens out of practice of maitri, loving-kindness. You naturally begin to expand, naturally begin to yearn, without particular object in mind, but that sense of expansion itself is yearning. Not from the point of view of possessing or grasping, but just simply expanding. Your mind can’t help itself; you can’t help yourself. But you go toward, always, whether it’s situation of whatever—person, event, book, practice, food—going toward. The meeting with the kalyanamitra, spiritual friend, is that culmination of yearning, of expansive quality of tathagatagarbha trying to fulfill itself, break out of the shell of garbha.

“Garbha,” means seed or embryo, embryonic. “Tathatagata,” one who’s gone beyond, in other words, achieved enlightenment. So that seed of enlightenment is expanding, growing into a plant, trying to express itself, trying to break through shell. And that shell is not simply what people would call neurosis of a bad job, but the shell is simply garbha, nature, becoming manifest. So it’s a different way of looking at it. From the ordinary point of view it’s saying it’s neurotic event, but from the bodhisattva’s point of view it’s celebration of enlightenment expressing itself, until it’s fully expressed. So meeting the spiritual friend is inevitable unfolding of tathagatagarbha, inevitable confrontation with a compassionate attitude in ourselves.

The spiritual friend is so-called because of two things: one, that spiritual friend is human being, not claimed to be descendent of the heavens or whatever, not claimed to be divine actually but only taking a temporary stay in order to help a poor people out, but rather a simple human being who practiced the path and achieved a sense of compassion and skillful means toward others. And the Buddha is considered the spiritual friend in terms of he is called a leader among men, not leader among gods, or not god particularly, but just happened to be born a human being. That’s one aspect.

The other aspect of spiritual friend is that having done so, having practiced and accomplished the bodhisattva’s discipline, that spiritual friend is a foreigner to us. So there is attraction and hesitation, which is the sense of tathagatagarbha unfolding. Can only be put actually into the world with meeting of the spiritual friend who represents both aspects of oneself, who manifests back to us both aspects of completely unfolded and unfolding at the same time. So spiritual friend is somewhat of a foreigner. He’s not like mother, or she is not like mother, or father, or sister or brother. There’s something very different from the relationship of family to spiritual friend. Spiritual friend is warm, considerate, kind, loving, human, being, but different. Spiritual friend has no scruples about being a human being, which is very frightening, because spiritual friend

does not intend to behave conventionally, con—for convention’s sake, as mother would like, or father would like, but just behaves out of spontaneous intelligence. Spiritual friend is the real encounter with other because he or she stands for himself and that’s it. Being Buddhist means that, standing for yourself.

So in meeting the spiritual friend there’s tremendous attraction and fascination with style, display, quality, unconventional behavior, at the same time, warmth, openness and unending energy to work with you as a student. So you’re drawn and repulsed at the same time. But you’ve already been trapped with your own intention, so there is really no choice. It may take quite a long time to get up the embarrassment to meet the spiritual friend and put yourself out, so to speak, [laughs] but that collision course is unavoidable.

In working with the spiritual friend there is a sense that he knows that we know, which is very unnerving for our neurosis. Because the spiritual friend simply gives back what you give out, endlessly. Unnerving means the spiritual friend sees your buddha-nature and you know that he sees. Therefore when you display your neurosis it is embarrassing, as if you knew better. On the other hand, the spiritual friend loves your neurosis, [laughter] something to talk about, [laughter] something to work with, which is even more embarrassing. How can such a person exist outside my projections? It’s monumental and inspiring. You go to see the spiritual friend and you say, “Well, I know that there’s really not much to say.” [Laughter] And he says, “Yes, that’s true.” “But since we’re here - [laughs] well, I don’t want to bother you with this but anyway, since we’re here...” And out it comes, whatever it is, which you know you already know the answer to, but unfortunately you can’t help yourself from saying it again. [laughter]

Because the spiritual friend represents that sense of other as compassion, and you realize, begin to realize, that your relationship to the spiritual friend is very important in the sense that the spiritual friend never rejects your neurosis as something that has to be destroyed. In other words, the expression of ego on the bodhisattva path is allowed to be there, which is discipline.

Real discipline in terms of the bodhisattva’s approach is allowing ego to express itself without condemning or affirming ego’s existence. That’s very, very, central theme, as we’ve been talking about for three days. But it comes into complete manifestation with the experience of meeting the spiritual friend and working with the spiritual friend.

The point is the spiritual friend doesn’t particularly think for himself, and that is the possibility of buddha-nature in you being ripened. From the spiritual friend’s point of view, it’s pure potential all the way. That your neurosis as student is pure potential and delightful to see. That your little hide-and-seek game is very transparent. That you say, “Well, I’m terrible I’m this; I’m that, you know. I made a mistake. I didn’t make a mistake, but...” Spiritual friend says, “Well, we can work with that.” But actually he’s quite amenable to your neurosis, so much so that that becomes inspiring in terms of journey—that we begin to actually, for the first time, work with the totality of our experience rather than just the fragments of it—and that comes about in terms of relationship, in terms of action. We begin to realize that this journey that we are on is not all that horrible as we thought, and there’s some interesting quality, some spark to it. It’s kind of adventure of potential. And we begin to see enlightenment in terms of spiritual friend as manifest, human being manifest. And our fear of actually expressing our own buddha-nature starts to move, become fluid, become the path, rather than as a block. Basically everybody knows. Experientially we have different situation all the time. So not copping to the fact that we’re intelligent is the path,

and being intelligent is allowing for the fact that we don't cop to it. Without the rubbing against the spiritual friend in terms of our desire, our passion, our aggression, our ignorance, there's no way to actually embark on the path of the bodhisattva. Therefore such spiritual friends should be seen at all costs, should be venerated, and should be questioned, constantly. We should pick their brains, so to speak, find out if there's anything to find out of the spiritual friend. If you do so you find that the spiritual friend doesn't mind at all being picked apart completely. But if you wait, hold back, then you just prolong what eventually is going to happen, in any case. So the point is to step forward and display your embarrassment without hesitation, but also with intelligence and realizing that as you walk into the room with the spiritual friend that your shadow, your echo, comes along with you.

If you have any questions we could have a discussion at this point.

QUESTIONS

Question: The mistake that you talked about, that comes along with the inspiration that allows one to walk on the bodhisattva path, is that the same as doubt, the doubt that comes along with compassion?

Vajra Regent: Yes.

Q: Hmmm. Thank you.

Q: You don't mind if I ask a question from tomor- last night, do you?

VR: [whispers] Yep. No.

Q: You mentioned that the hinayana practice brings you to boredom in the sense that there's no alternative, that that's there. And then you said something about a thought, then a thought arises out of that boredom which is enlightenment. And I couldn't, I don't understand that. Could you...

VR: It's not particularly "the thought arises which is enlightenment", but enlightenment is there by itself and the thought arises that it's possible that it is there.

Q: You said that the doubt becomes accepting other or your view of other, in yourself. What's the connection between the doubt that you are... the doubt of the reality of tathagatagarbha becomes this acceptance of, of the negativity of your view of others. How does that work?

VR: How does it work? Well, basically the point there is that inspiration of tathagatagarbha is inspiration of totality, that everything's included in your state of mind. Completely awake, so there's glimpse of that, a flash of that, glimpse of being awake, which also produces the doubt that maybe it's not so. And that two things going together is the pursuit of each other which moves you to begin to accept. In other words, explore, expand, and accept your projections first, because that's the first thing you encounter as you begin to go out, is your own version of things. And if you stay with that long enough then that starts to expand into real sense of other, real sense of path.

Q: It was mentioned in discussion group today that I was in, that one gains a greater confidence as one progresses which you were talking about just now?

VR: Uh-hmm.

Q: I understand.

VR: Yeah, so they say. [laughter]

Q: One might have many teachers, but how do you recognize your spiritual friend?

VR: The one who embarrasses you the most. [laughter] Just really deadly, you know? [laughter] You can't get away from the spiritual friend. Your real, your real spiritual friend, no matter where you go, if you try to escape, that process of escape is already embarrassing. See what I mean? You say, "Well, even"—you don't even talk to the spiritual friend. You say, "Well, I don't want to see that person." [laughter] "And it's no point. I know when [inaudible]" [laughter] Then it sort of echoes back, what you're saying echoes back, you know. I think you know. I mean—it's, it's not very mystical or anything like that; it's very ordinary. The spiritual friend is very ordinary, therefore seemingly magical. From our point of view we see the spiritual friend as having a thousand arms and hands and doing all kinds of things and relating with everybody's point of view all at once and fantastic. Spiritual friend on the other hand, from spiritual friend's point of view, everything is quite ordinary. This is just simply what human beings should do. So those two things: sense of not being able to escape and a sense of ordinariness. There's no particular lights flashing or anything it's just so damn ordinary. At the same time it's very personal, can't get out of it.

Q: Referring to spiritual friend, seems like it could only be with one person. Is it possible that during one's experience on the path, spiritual friend could take one or could be encountered in different people?

VR: That's true. Basically In terms of the path, it is best to follow the teachings of the spiritual friend. In the case of the spiritual friend there are many variations of that. There are a lot of people who are friends—spiritual friends to some degree or another—but basically there's only one spiritual friend. But there are different variations of that as you go along the path. Somebody directs you a little bit this way, directs you a little bit that way, but when you get to the spiritual friend it's obvious because you're so trapped. There's a connection that involves a sense of tremendous awe and devotion, at the same time tremendous fear and pushing away. So that usually only happens with one person, doesn't happen with the whole bunch.

Q: Is a spiritual friend ever an inner voice?

VR: Inner voice.

Q: Um hmm.

VR: Basically a spiritual friend is outer voice. [laughter]

Q: So, it's al-, it's always another, another human being.

VR: Human being. Yeah. Definitely, human being. Most definitely. human being. Whether or not that human being is your voice or their voice, that remains to be seen. But definitely has a human body. Eats, sleeps, [laughter], and all the rest of it. [laughter] Dies.

Q: Back in '74 at a Maitri conference in California, you talked about if le-, if you were working with people and somebody were to come in to you at some point, you would start relating to your own projections, as soon as they walked into the room. And since then, that's been something continuously question in my mind of that...

VR: Hm hmm.

Q: about how that works. And tonight what you're raising about maitri in general of one's relationship to their projections, is that the same thing?

VR: Exactly the same.

Q: So there's absolutely nothing different at all about the quality of... there wou... there's nothing manipulative at all going on.

VR: Not that I know of.

Q: [laughs] Thank you.

Q: What, what do you mean when you talk about venerating the spiritual friend?

VR: Well, venerating the spiritual friend means that you actually, traditionally prostrate on the floor, fall down. But psychologically it means that you don't hold your opinions as solid, and that you request that the spiritual friend teach. In other words, the sense of constantly trying to reaffirm your own existence by hearing the spiritual friend is not particularly veneration. It's quite the opposite. So it's some sense of letting go of your preconceptions, and your expectations of the spiritual friend.

Everybody approaches spiritual friend with a pile of preconceptions. [laughter] And the point is actually to offer them, offer your neurosis rather than hold on to your neurosis as mine; this is my point of view. Spiritual friend, you say, "Well, this is it. [laughs] This is what I've got; it's not much, but here it is." You know, "It's confused; it's fucked up, blah blah blah; here it is." So it's kind of veneration in that sense of actually prostrating your neurosis down, giving away, not because spiritual friend actually needs that, but simply you come to the realization that's all you've got. Does that make sense? [Laughs]

It's good point, interesting point. When you talk about veneration, people think it's the other way around. That the spiritual friend feels good if you do some crazy thing, or some wonderful thing. Spiritual friend cou... doesn't really need either one. But it's your process. So there's some sort of a communication can take place which is the basis of mahayana, of bodhisattva path. If there's too much of your own ego tendencies held onto then all we get is simply projection. But if you just lay out the projections on the table and say, "This it it", then perhaps there's a possibility of communicating. That doesn't mean that when you see the spiritual friend you have to confess, you know. That there's some sort of willingness on your part to expose whatever there is, even if it's very slowly.

Q: Could you say something more about fear breaking up obstacles on the path?

VR: Fear breaking up obstacles on the path. How come?

Q: Well you said that fear was necessary to make the path more fluid and workable.

VR: Fear?

Q: Yeah.

VR: I don't remember the context.

Q: It was that fear of expressing buddha nature.

VR: Fear of expressing buddha-nature. That's different than saying "fear." [laughs]

Yeah, well you know, it's kind of sense of, "I know, but I won't tell." So it's a stubborn quality and also fearful that it's too true to be good. [laughter] So that propels the journey of unfolding of that good or that true or that too, [laughter] because of hesitation.

Q: So it's just breaking up the hesitation?

VR: No, it's including the hesitation. It's not breaking up the hesitation. Hesitation itself is only seen as hesitation from an ego point of view. From the point of view it's, of enlightenment, it's tathagatagarbha, buddha-nature expressing itself.

Q: It seems to be a delicate balance, or a delicate point, between making friends with your neurosis and indulging in your neurosis. And could you say more about that?

VR: Sure. If you make friends with your neurosis, then you don't exclude what you don't like. If you indulge, then you exclude what you don't like.

Q: [laughs] More confused. [laughs]

VR: It's very simple. Why confused?

Q: Yeah, well it seems that...

VR: Indulgence means, "this is rotten; this is good; I'll stick to the good and forget the rotten." In bodhisattva's point of view rotten and good mix together, because it's all ours, you know.

Q: I was thinking more in terms of if, you know, following the bodhisattva path, try, making attempt to follow the paramitas, the practices of the bodhisattva.

VR: Yeah. and surrendering,

Q: And that that's going to, you know, and that's going to come, you know at times very much, you know, be very difficult. And a...

VR: Well I don't think one should attempt to practice the paramitas until you have some experience of friendship with yourself. That's what we're talking about. Otherwise we're jumping the gun. And then you get shot in the back. [laughter] You have to make friends with your projections first before you think you can practice such lofty things as generosity and patience and things like that. [laughs] That's why it becomes indulgence, because you get trippy; we get trippy on those things, you know, they're completely fantasy.

Q: What did you mean by, that your neurosis and all your mental patterns are other? What did you mean by that? Consider them other.

VR: Well, what that is is that you actually don't know who so-and-so is, but you have your idea of who so-and-so is. That's the first thing you actually relate with as other, is your idea of other.

Q: How does that develop into compassion, I mean, how does one work with that to ...

VR: Well because it comes back, in other words. So-and-so's a rotten egg, and you get the smell, the smell of the rotten egg. If you say so-and-so's a rotten egg, it smells, immediately, so you have to let the smell come back then, [laughs] since you put it out. In other words, your, your opinions and your description of other, your projection of other, you allow to come back to you.

Q: Well how do you, how does one work with that if it seems like a very solid space, especially at times when you're not sitting and there's more security in sitting ...

VR: Well that's when it happens. It doesn't come when you're sitting. [laughs] Comes when you're walking around like a little human being. [laughter] That's how you work with it, you allow it back. You don't work with it any other way, I mean, there's no other way to work with it particularly. There's nothing you can actually do about it. That's the whole point. You can't change it, manipulate it, whatever, but you allow it to come back, allow it to exist. In other words, that rotten egg is your own rotten ego, at the same time, you know. So you can't have resentment about smelling it. Since you recognized it, therefore it's intelligent.

Q: I still don't understand about this hesitation. I feel it but I don't understand it.

VR: Oh?

Q: Well, what's it about, I meant why...

VR: It's just being timid.

Q: [laughter] Okay.

VR: So what?

Q: So what?

VR: You still have it?

Q: Sure.

VR: Well, that's why there's such a thing as path. Did you want one shot deal?

Q: Yeah. [laughs] Sure.

VR: Well we can try again.

Q: Okay.

VR: So, what should the spiritual friend be endlessly questioned about? [laughter]

VR: Whatever comes up. [laughter] Hopefully the dharma, if not, ...

Q: Yeah.

VR: ... other dharma, higher dharma, lower dharma. Higher dharma is the teachings of the Buddha; lower dharma is whether or not you should take this job or, anything. get married.

Q: Suppose he won't talk to you.

VR: Then you should endeavor to find out why he's not talking to you. Which is again questioning. He will, or she will, there's no doubt about that. May take some time, but [laughter] definitely will.

VR: [laughter] Rotation.

Q: Is there a difference between the thought of enlightenment that comes out of boredom and the sense of yearning that you feel in relation to the spiritual friend?

VR: No, that's just a continuation of the same thing.

Q: Yeah.

VR: [Sighs; laughs] There's a lot of questions coming up now. [laughs] Whoops. Sure.

Q: If it isn't possible to see your spiritual friend a lot or hardly at all, can the sangha as a whole act as your spiritual friend during...

VR: If the sangha's connected to the spiritual friend.

Q: Could you say something about the role of the sangha...

VR: The point is, is never to give up. [laughter]

Q: I didn't understand why you said spiritual friend doesn't need...

VR: ... your prostrations?

Q: Yeah, because ...

VR: Your neurosis?

Q: Why would they be there?

VR: Ah, just because they're there!

Q: [laughs]

VR: That's the opposite of why you're there. [laughter, laughs] You're there because you think you need something.

Q: And so that's the reason they're there.

VR: That's right. Got it? [laughs]

VR: Nancy.

Q: What isn't the other, at this point?

VR: Your projections.

Q: But you begin to use them in the beginning.

VR: That's because, well, that's what you think the other is.

Q: Okay.

VR: In other words your thought process is not the other, if there is any other at all. It's impossible to find out unless you work through your own thought process first, your own interpretation.

VR: Back, back. No, the other way. [laughs]

Q: Isn't the, the sense of, like you project out and that bounces back and that's in, like the other cuts through; you see the mistake; you see the fallacy or you see... I mean, isn't that a sense of, is that still totally mind or isn't, you know, it's regis... if it's registering something else besides your idea, you thought so-and-so was a rotten egg, and then it cuts home so clearly that that's your thing...

VR: That's only in connection with the spiritual friend. Basically before you meet the spiritual friend it doesn't happen. Then after you meet the spiritual friend, then that becomes the spiritual friend's teaching.

Q: Even when the spiritual friend...

VR: Is not there.

Q: ... is not involved. Yeah.

VR: Yeah.

Q: But is that other, is that somewhat other, half and half?

VR: Which one? The projections coming back or the ...

Q: The thing that shoots back and cuts ...

VR: No, that's, that's tathagatagarbha. [Laughs]

Q: Yeah, yeah.

VR: Oh, somebody. Here it comes. [laughter] [pause]

Q: This is a clarification on the same thing. So you, you throw out, you sort of step out with your projection and then just open yourself to whatever it is that bounces back and you, you may meet your, your projection back accurately or you may just get a horrible slap in the face and you just ...

VR: That's basically the same thing.

Q: Yeah. [laughs, laughter]

VR: Your projection's always not what you thought. You know, comes back again. You thought it was other and it turns out to be yourself. So it's sort of slap in the face in any case. Like this [slaps face twice].

Q: Is it impossible to have an accurate projection that maps with, with what's, what's there? VR: Well then it wouldn't be projection anymore. No need to project because everything is manifest as it is. Wouldn't like to project something being there, because everything's already here, our bodies, this room, the whole thing; it's right here; it's nowhere else ...

Q: Hm hmm.

VR: ... and it's perfectly okay, straightforward and sane.

Q: I've been having some problems with seeing my goals. I've been having a lot of goals, and I see them a lot as egotistical goals. And I was wondering how, you know, to see them as like transparent, transparency of egotistical goals.

VR: Well I think that, two things is that, one, seeing your goals as egotistical is, is right practice in any case. Trying to get rid of them because they're egotistical is the wrong practice. In other words, you allow them to be there.

Q: And see them. But I ...

VR: They're irritating, that's true. Because they're egotistical they're irritating, and somewhat crude.

Q: Is that seeing them as transparent?

VR: I think so. It's coming there. Yeah.

Q: Thank you.

Q: It seems very difficult to trust in something beyond kind of good and bad. I was wondering how that relationship evolves.

VR: How you can do so?

Q: Yeah.

VR: Well, it's simply because, recognizing it in oneself. In other words when you no longer are concerned about whether you're good or whether you're bad in terms of definite opposing qualities, but rather you see the whole thing at once then you can begin to trust. In order to see both sides at once you have to let both sides in. So it involves attitude of meditative awareness, nonaggression. Meditative awareness is not choosing sides between good and bad.

Q: What does that have to do in that, a personal relationship ... with the teachings?

VR: Well, personal relationship begins with a person, oneself. Personal relationship with someone else, to begin with, we should recognize that we put our baggage onto somebody else, lay our trip, overlay onto somebody else, and then expect that something that we wanted back in return. That's what we do and we call that relationship. But what we're doing is talking to ourselves. Hmm. Okay, [laughs]

Herbert. [pause] Hmm. Worth waiting for.

Q: I'm a little concerned about the relationships between letting it all in, in the sense of compassion, and standing for oneself. And is there any conflict between those two or ...

VR: Hmm. Yeah. Basically no, because if we try to jump the gun, if we try to stand for oneself before we let in our projections, then what we stand for is a projection of ourselves, which bounces back in any case. So you can't really try and stand for yourself without feedback. So feedback is always there, and it's usually quite accurate.

Q: Well then there would be no, nothing lost then, to speed up the process and just make, in regards to standing for oneself, assumed it's projection nonetheless.

VR: No, what we're talking about is speeding up the process by development of maitri.

Q: Okay, what I was concerned about is where does idiot, is there some sense of idiot compassion that happens?

VR: Well wait around. We didn't get to that yet. We just talk about our own projections at this point, which I don't think that's any idiot compassion there at all, just purely idiot. [laughter] [pause] You think, you mean if we have ridiculous thoughts and act on those thoughts, that's idiot compassion?

Q: No, more. I don't know, ridiculous ... I was thinking of ridiculous situations, but perhaps there is no such thing. Perhaps you just keep walking backwards or ...

VR: I think they're all basically, from the point of view of developing maitri, they're all ridiculous situations. That's the whole point of maitri, is some sense of loving-kindness for the ridiculous and absurd, which is happening all the time.

Q: Is there a particular style that that loving-kindness is supposed to be expressed? Could it be ...

VR: No, I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think there's particular style. It's just basically

gentleness, whatever gentleness means.

Q: Are there times when we are in fact acting openly, being very open to a situation? Or is the thought of such a possibility just another one of my deceptions?

VR: The thought of such a possibility is two things: one of your deceptions and your intelligence.

Q: You said it's one, it's a possibility of one of those two things.

VR: No, it's both. So therefore we always keep track, you see, so that ego doesn't get hold of us in terms of believing in projections, believing in your thought. In other words you distrust the thought because it's a thought and not actuality. Which means that you have some understanding of that actuality already, or else you wouldn't distrust the thought.

So, I think that's all for this evening. [laughs] It's very late. Yeah. We have one more discussion together tomorrow. And before I leave tonight I would like to remind everybody of the situation we are in. Which could be interpreted in two ways. One as other, and one as our own projection. The situation we are in is we are at an intensive training session at Karmê-Chöling in a meditation hall in Vermont, which is real and unreal. Real in the sense of wood, paint, lights, people. Unreal in the sense that it's either our own little world or everybody is recognizing the fact that we're here at once together. In recognizing that, there is some sense of extending oneself to identify with other people who also feel the reality of being here. That means that it is necessary to actually support such a place as Karmê-Chöling. Not for our own benefit simply, but because it is so. It is here. Not making apologies for itself, but actually standing for itself, therefore we should venerate it and continue it. So in any way you can do so that would be appreciated by all of us who appreciate such things. [laughs] Thank you.