

Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin

Theory and Practice of Meditation

Talk 8

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Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin: Well, ladies and gentlemen, we should bring things together. And that is the entrance into the vajrayana, or the indestructible vehicle.

The indestructible vehicle means that when meditation practice becomes immutable, meditation practice does not need a practitioner, which is a crazy idea, to say the least—which is a wild idea. But if we actually go along through this path, it becomes obvious that intelligence by itself does not need any kind of echo. In Buddhism, especially in the teaching which we have become familiar with, we have been saying the same thing from the very beginning, and that is, intelligence does not need an echo, which is called ego. Intelligence does not need critique, point of view, an opinion. Intelligence does not need to be supported by anything.

Because we are confused, it is necessary to hear, it is necessary to practice, it is necessary to wear out the idea, the notion, that we need some kind of confirmation about who and what we are. Having experienced the middle way, that is, having seen that all things, including oneself, have no substance whatsoever, have no enduring quality as an entity, a self—having experienced that—we experience what's called shunyata or the absence of reference point, or just simple experience as it is. And that simple experience might be misunderstood without the proper meditative training.

In fact, it is misunderstood, universally. We could say that all beings experience shunyata, with a reference point, but only those who have actually walked on the Buddhist path can come to fruition, come to some experience of liberation from reference point. Reference point is twofold: seeing things in relationship to myself, seeing things in relationship to others. Those are the two reference points we have. “Others” include things. Experience of shunyata reduces the reference point to zero, and that zero we could say is the final experience of the hinayana and the mahayana paths. And that is a zero which does not need any kind of support, doctrinal or even... doctrinal, philosophical, even—in terms of experiential—you can't say that the experience of shunyata was a great experience. You can't say that, “I had a wonderful experience of shunyata the other day.”

But we are now entering into the vajrayana, which is also called the tantrayana, the immutable path, indestructible path. And that indestructible path is based on commitment which goes beyond any doubt. It is based on commitment which is the statement that practice of meditation and oneself are the same. So what we are talking about is a unity, a unity of experience which may seem very simple but—at the same time—we have tremendous profundity here, and vastness. The simple statement is this: that the practitioner, what he or she practices, and what the result is, are the

same. Very simple statement, which means also that there is no difference between the concept of self, the concept of activity and the concept of the world.

We have understood that concepts by themselves are empty, have no particular existence, which includes oneself. But then we come to the point of recognizing that, experiencing that, and there is some sort of movement which occurs afterwards, of reverberation, echo. And that echo has to be completely ironed out, flattened out. Well, we could say that echo has to be extended, rather than flattened out. Flattened out is experience of shunyata. Extended is the entrance into the vajrayana path, the tantric teachings. We come to colossal, “so what.” Monumental, “so what.” Not this, not that, nor both, nor neither. So what? And still there is action. And still there is karma, cause and effect. And still there is birth, old age, sickness and death. Even so, there is still that.

So what we come to in the vajrayana is the development of skillful means, “upaya” in Sanskrit. Upaya in this case is having the realization that one’s insight, which is called prajna, and the experience of prajna, which is called shunyata, come together completely. So there is no separation at all between the experiencer and the experience. What’s the point of saying that? The point of saying that is simply this: that enlightenment is not completely full unless a thing is a thing. Enlightenment is not completely full when there is only the absolute truth or only the relative truth. Both things come together in the vajrayana. What is experienced and the experiencer come together. And this is the unification of the teachings, the teacher and the student. How does that occur? It occurs because shunyata, the experience of shunyata, is so all-encompassing, so flat, so complete, that whatever arises is also complete.

I hope you are following me here. Do you remember we talked about, last time, the middle way? There’s no self and no other, no existence, no non-existence. What does that point out? Experientially, it points out that everything, whatever there is in terms of existence, is completely one, full. Not full of anything, but full. Total is a better word than full. But therefore whatever arises from that fullness is also full. This means that neurosis and sanity join together in fullness or completeness. This means that when you practice the vajrayana, discursive thought and all the rest of it become part of the enlightened ground and the enlightened action.

This is very tough stuff, here. I’m not just talking about a little bit of goody for anybody, but what we’re talking about is when your thoughts, A, B, C, D—which is basically what we’ve been considering all the while—that our thoughts are A, B, C, D, space. Those particular thoughts are real. Those bodily movements, those emotions are real. They take part in the self-existing shunyata. What we are boiling down to is a little bit of a pot, a little bit of a flame. We’re boiling down to it and only two things happening, nothing and something. It is very simple. Nothing is the background. Something is the appearance. Something comes out of nothing and returns into nothing, so therefore there is no difference between the two. In fact even saying that is slightly off. Therefore the two are the same, equal.

When we enter the vajrayana, we are talking about entering the path where all things, experiences, are regarded as equal. Absolute or relative, neurosis or sanity, all take part in a self-existing totality which is neither mind nor not mind. What we had so far, if you remember, is mind as such, and not mind. Now we have the fact that we can actually experience, realize that both extremes are irrelevant, mind and not mind, absolute and relative.

Are we going along here? It’s very simple. Here it goes again: You feel alright. You feel good,

walking along, meet your friend. Say, “Hello, how are you?” “I’m fine.” “I heard about you the other night.” “Oh yeah? What did I do?” “You were quite drunk.” “Oh, yes, I was.” “Well, good to see you again.” Walk along. Basic split. We split in two, between experience of who we are, and what’s out there.

In the vajrayana we begin to see that that split is actually the combination of two things, one’s intelligence and one’s experience. We always have that split, intelligence and experience. Even to the point of practicing the paramitas. We dwell on one or the other. In vajrayana we click the whole thing together. [snaps fingers] One’s intelligence and one’s experience are the same thing. And they are immutable. Indestructible. They are the essence of meditation. They are meditation and they are one’s state of mind at the same time.

What happens? What happens is that one begins to feel tremendous sense of great joy. One begins to feel it, you see, feel it personally, and that feeling it is not ego at that point, not at all. It is the experience of emptiness which is great joy because there is no reason to hang on to anything—one’s sense of self or other—at all, because one realizes that one’s intelligence and the object of one’s intelligence are the same thing, [snaps] on the spot, simultaneous.

It’s very, very tight. So tight and so complete. It is the fruition of discipline. Up to this point, in entering the vajrayana, discipline of meditation practice is a chore. Even in the mahayana that chore is the sense of expansiveness, but there is still the sense of push. In the vajrayana, push between oneself and other becomes diffused, between space and the boundary of space, come together. And one begins to realize the totality of practice. Practice, as a word, becomes real for the first time. The word becomes real for the first time. The speech becomes real for the first time. Along with that the body becomes real for the first time and the mind becomes real for the first time. Complete. Experiencing that, something actually begins to percolate—that there is absolutely no fear whatsoever of the world of phenomena, of what happens in our experience.

There is nothing to fear about what happens. What happens itself is empty, shunya, at the same time mahasukha, great joy. Because it is empty of any personal concern, therefore it is joyous, therefore it happens unobstructedly. When that occurs we begin to develop real devotion, what is called devotion. Devotion has been spoken about in every tradition from the beginning of whatever the beginning of is, but when we talk about devotion in the Buddhist tradition, it is the complete awakening of non-duality. That’s the contrast. One would say, “How can you awaken non-duality? That would be impossible. Since it is non-dual, what is there to awaken?” But in our tradition, we say that the awakening of non-duality is the appearance of devotion in one’s consciousness, one’s being.

Devotion takes three forms. Devotion first to the teacher, the one who has expressed the sentiments, the teachings which click with one’s own experience. When it actually happens that you actually click to the whole thing, then you begin to recognize the preciousness of that teacher who said those things to you for twenty years, fifteen years, five years, three years, been saying it over and over again to you, all the time. You finally say, “Uh.” Or you finally say, “Ah.” Both, actually, “Uh ah.” [laughter] Then there is devotion to the sangha, those people who have been doing it as well, along with you. And devotion to the dharma, the teachings that you have been so fortunate to receive. In other words, you become in yourselves a storehouse or repository of all that which has gone before. That is how fullness and emptiness come together. Guru is the Buddha, teacher is the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha come together.

Those three principles which is—which are—one’s own body, speech and mind, those three unite with those three, which is simply saying that when you perceive, it’s continuous. You get it? Perceiver, perceiving, perceived—continuous. No sense of separation. When meditation practice becomes like that, tremendous heart develops and devotion develops in the student—that they are willing at once and finally to actually hear the essence of the teachings. They are willing at once and finally to hear the body, speech, and mind of the guru, which is the fundamental expression of the phenomenal world. That process, called abhisheka, Sanskrit word which means “empowerment”—or I think the literal thing is “sprinkle and pour”—annointment or empowerment. Willing to receive abhisheka from the guru, which means willing to completely surrender whatever ego there is. At that point ego is not particularly a problem. It is, on the other hand, an offering. Having done so, we develop upaya, skillful means. Skillful means means that the phenomenal world and one’s mind are the same. Therefore there is no reason to be shy, there is no reason to be afraid. There is wind, water, fire, earth, and all the rest of it, and we are of the same nature, and we can actually change the world in that way.

When you receive such empowerment there is the possibility of actually changing the world in that way because you have no resistance to the world any more in terms of ego, that your ego is actually offered, surrendered to the body, speech and mind of the guru which is vajra-like, indestructible. In the process of offering, one actually transmutes, changes, makes a cloudy sky bright, makes rain into snow, into wind into water, whatever we like. It is possible not to be the victim of confusion after all. It is possible to achieve full enlightenment.

So we have these principles: we have shunyata, which is the absence of reference point; and we have the arising of experience in that space of non-reference-point, which is compassion, which is skillful means, upaya. We have the indivisibility of the two, upaya and prajna. Prajna is that which sees shunyata, in other words, our inquisitive intelligence. Shunyata is our experience. The result is compassion because we realize there is no point in making a fuss. In fact, beyond that, there is some point in creating a world. Realizing that, we have extreme sense of awakening which is called devotion. Non-dualistic devotion is what is called awakening. Awakening produces the realization that the body, speech and mind of the guru is of vajra nature and that is inseparable from ourselves. Therefore it is possible to actually transform the world and one’s consciousness into the realm of enlightenment.

We could have questions at this point.

## QUESTIONS

Question: Vajra Regent, would you talk a little bit more about the sense of boundary? You spoke of space and boundary.

Vajra Regent: Mmm, space is the sense of, the experience of shunyata. Boundary is the post-experience of shunyata. You see, I think people misunderstand this shunyata business completely. Shunyata is an experience and an experience has duration. It is impermanent. Prajna is that which activates the experience of shunyata, in other words, inquisitive intelligence. If you are inquisitive into things as they are, that inquisitive intelligence is born from meditation practice. And meditation in action, beyond sitting, is looking into everything without bias whatsoever, produces experience of shunyata, flash of no thing. But that sense of no thing has its after-effect, boundary, which is usually considered “me.” N’est pas? You got it? Yeah. Well, if one continues that train,

one continues that practice, that “me” also becomes shunyata. See, when you experience no thing, you think, “I’m experiencing no thing.” But then the reference point to no thing makes this no thing as well, so you have a boundary which is the experiencer and the experience coming together because you can’t support the experiencer at all. Right?

Q: Right. I guess.

VR: But still, something remains, which is energy, spark. That is the vajrayana sense of totality, that the difference between the experiencer and the experience dissolves into totality, what is. If you can’t say that you experience shunyata, then you can’t say that shunyata exists. On the other hand, you can say that nothing seems to exist. Right?

Q: I don’t know. I find that kind of hard to understand.

VR: Exactly. That’s what we mean by making one’s neurosis as completely workable, completely one hundred percent workable. And that finding it hard to understand is itself shunyata. So there is absolutely no problem that you find it hard to understand. You see, you can do that, you can actually do that.

Q: Thank you. [laughter]

Q: There’s a very self-defeating notion to the whole idea of working with your neurosis. And that self-defeating notion is that you have to be healthy, because there has to be some part of you which is healthy in order to work with that neurosis.

VR: Right.

Q: How, in terms of change... What I’m trying to understand from your talk is that—if I’m to understand you completely—there’s nothing I can do?

VR: Nothing at all. Except realize that there’s nothing you can do. Now you have two things happening there. We could get right down on this. First thing we realize is there is nothing we can do, and then the second thing we realize is there’s nothing we can do. The first thing is abstract, the other thing has to do with the body and environment. First flash you get is like the flash of shunyata, there’s no form to anything at all. There’s nothing we can do. Second thing you get, everybody gets, is that there’s nothing I can do. Huh?

Q: Yeah.

VR: Yeah. Everybody got it. Right. Well, in vajrayana those two things come together: nothing I can do as abstract, nothing I can do as concrete. You begin to realize that we are saying the same thing to each other, to ourselves. We are saying, “Nothing I can do. Nothing I can do. Nothing I can do I can do.” Which creates tremendous breakthrough, and humor, also tremendous sense of actually making a nice big swipe and sweep. You can finger-paint the world.

Q: Okay. May I ask a second question then?

VR: Sure.

Q: From the point of view, okay, the course is theory and practice. From the point of view of practice, now, I imagine if we use the analogy of the alphabet, you’re about at Z right now and I’m about at B.

VR: No, if we use the analogy of the alphabet, you're at Z... Ah, I'm at Z and you're at A.

Q: Okay. Sure. [laughter] Okay. Question still stands then, I mean it doesn't, it doesn't...

VR: Well, the question resolves itself. If there's A, there's Z, and there's everything in between. Everything. Nothing excluded. You want to get over here?

Q: Actually, the... actually, its the reverse. [laughter]

VR: You want me to get over there.

Q: No. [laughter] It's almost insurmountable. It seems almost like nonsense.

VR: Relax, it's very simple: ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST.

Q: More specifically, the whole theory is contradictory to the practice.

VR: Absolutely, absolutely. Now tell me how.

Q: How? Because there's nothing to do.

VR: Right. How's that contradictory to the practice?

Q: Right. I mean, my wife just said, "If you're... just do it." Which is what I keep answering, how I keep answering my own questions.

VR: Ah. That's a great point. I'm glad your wife said that because I forgot something which I should say—bringing everybody into vajrayana—is the masculine and feminine principle, which is the same thing as saying, ah, intelligence and emptiness. That those two join together. Your wife saying the wisdom thing, you know. She said what you should have known already. Right? You clicking to that—what you knew already—because the two things come together, you and your wife. It's the same thing as perception and perceived, it's the same thing as prajna and shunyata coming together, penetrating intelligence awakened by meditation practice and the experience of that, which is shunyata. Listen, what I'm trying to say, everybody, is that at some point in one's practice, those two things are separate. At that point it is necessary to go beyond. The two things come together, penetrating intelligence and experience of that. We realize there's no separation. That makes what's called sacred world. That makes what everything, every little detail that happens in the world as completely sacred, full, the same thing as saying sacred is full. Empty, full at the same time. What she said and what you said come together, create a question, which is completely full and completely valid, sacred. Anyway, what were you saying?

Q: I suppose another way—just to rephrase what I am asking—is that you are pointing out something where I can't relate to it in terms of my own practice, or even to my own life.

VR: You have to jump, at this point. I understand. Jump along. Flip the whole thing. Flip it. You see, the point is, if you try to stuff it all in, make it nice, it doesn't work. There's no way to do that. Remember what's been said all the while as we've been teaching this course, is that we are teaching according to the practice and theory. You can't actually do the whole thing at once, but some of it comes through because what happens at the very beginning is what happens at the very end. The point is that we don't recognize that when we started to walk around the block, you know, we came out and we walked around the block and we wound up around the block, at the place we started. It's okay, you know, no joke, particularly. I'm not talking about a joke. I'm talking about the fact that the sense of path, what we're doing, practicing meditation, has been saying from the

beginning, that there is intelligence all the way through. What we're saying now is that experience of intelligence is not separate from intelligence, which is something that one has to do. You know. I can't make it happen.

Q: I understand. Thank you very much.

VR: You're welcome.

Q: I'm wondering about what you said about, um, entering the vajrayana, that there is a commitment that goes beyond doubt. Um, does it happen that in this state of non-dual devotion, there simply is no doubt? Is there a change in the relationship to doubt? Or, does doubt happen, non-dual devotion happens...

VR: Well, it's the same thing you know. Doubt—doubt which was experienced previously as an irritation—becomes practice, so therefore, when one doubts the teacher, the teachings, and the sangha, that becomes practice in itself. That doubt becomes further inquisitiveness, further prajna, which becomes shunyata. [laughs] Happens to everybody. I mean, let's not get confused about the words. Think about it. You have doubt, you look into it, you get a conclusion, and you get the conclusion as empty. It goes back around again. Is true? Not true? You tell me. What happens to your doubt?

Q: Well, what happens to my doubt is that it comes and it goes.

VR: Oh. Wait a minute. Slow down a minute. You see, that's what we're talking about. It comes and it goes. Right? How does it get from one place to another?

Q: Well, I like the way you described it.

VR: [laughs] I like it myself.

Q: Well, it's like what I experience is that I get into, I seem to have some, something happens that feels genuine. I start conceptualizing it and it gets bigger and bigger and bigger, and it starts to develop a tension between what I think I'm doing and what's going on in the environment. And then at some point, it kind of, uh, you know, the gap gets too big and then, uh...

VR: And then what?

Q: Well that's, that's where the doubting starts happening.

VR: There we have the point. That's what we're talking about here, ladies and gentlemen. That's the point. That's when it becomes texture, and not, "whew." You know, which we all would like to do, we would like to do it right now, wouldn't we? But it has texture as well.

Q: Doesn't it still... Doubt seems to hurt, though. Does it keep hurting? Or does one just appreciate it and dance around in it, and, you know... [laughter]

VR: It depends on which "one" you are talking about.

Q: Which one?

VR: What do you mean, "one"?

Q: A—a person.

VR: A person. Which person?

Q: A, um, an enlightened person.

VR: How about you? How about you? Or me?

Q: How about you? [laughter]

VR: That's what we say, you know, "How about you?" The point is, is that when we come to that experience of meditation becoming full, completely full, we can say, "How about you?" without any discontent. And therefore, I can say, since you asked, that when it comes to that point, it seems to me that one's doubts are the same as space except for the fact that there is experience. Now experience in this case means some kind of echo, some kind of this-that, me-you. You said, "What about you?" I say "Me? Do you mean me or do you mean you?" Well, I could say probably a lot of things—five, six, seven things—but let us suffice to say I acknowledge the fact that you and I are engaged in mutual activity which is real at this point. Which means absolutely nothing. [laughter] Everything I just said, absolutely nothing. On the other hand, we are having a slightly good time. [laughter] Which means we are trying to figure out the nature of mind, and the nature of who we are, and we are also... we have fundamental shunyata, which we experienced already. There is nothing happening, and then we have something arising from it, which doesn't make any sense whatsoever. Doesn't make any sense. But on the other hand it has a great sense of joy. There's no doubt about that. It has a great sense of joy. It has a great sense of appearance so we don't have to be depressed about what happens in our mind. It just happens in our mind, like that, it just happens. It's fantastic, magical. Sacred is what we call it in the vajrayana. It's sacred, what happens.

Q: Thank you.

VR: Sure. We're equal.

Q: So am I.

VR: Still equal. Still, you know.

[Possible gap due to tape switchover.]

VR: You see, that's that thin line between knowing what you said and knowing what I said. You might say that I understand what he said and everybody else, you know, because I'm Ösel Tendzin and I'm sitting up here. You say, "Well, he must be right." Or maybe, "He's not right." Or, "It depends on how sophisticated the audience is. Some of them are very sophisticated. They're very studious." And they say, "Well, he missed it right there." You know, and other people say, "Well, he got it right there." There's this little problem we have between totality and separateness. A little problem we have between, ah, the authority of what's happening—which is certainly not in defense of Communism at all. Despite what Allen Ginsburg says. I have absolutely no belief in political theories or in any sense of good heart, any sense of trust in believing in a cause. What I believe is so, is the fact that what we experience has no reference point. Therefore it is possible to actually change the world. If you believe in a reference point at all, then you cannot change the world, you actually distort the world completely. So if we talk together in terms of question and answer, it is not Communism at all. It is completely separate, at the same time together. You see, Communism, or Marxism, or democracy, or this-ism or that-ism is purely an attempt to make irritation smooth. From the point of view of vajrayana, irritation is actually an ornament. That our neurosis is so completely workable that it becomes the manifestation of shunyata, which is funny



stuff to say, but in any case there is no commune-anything. That's what people mistake as totality. They think we're all in it together, so therefore it's total. We're not in it together. We're not even in it together, separately. There's no choice in the whole thing.

Q: If the world is sacred, then why are we, why would we change it? I mean, what is upaya?

VR: We change it into continual sacredness, complete sacredness. Upaya is simply recognizing sacredness. It's not changing from the point of view of changing good to bad, or bad to good. It's simply recognizing that changingness, changing, is upaya. In other words, from nothing comes something and that something is nothing again. Therefore there is no point in making a fuss. There is no point in holding on to ego. The microphone you are holding is a thing, it is a real thing and it is completely empty of any meaning. But you still hold it and ask a question, which is great, fantastic. No problem to make a fuss. It might even be radioactive, and we might die in the process of asking this question and answer, but if we do it completely, and fully, well then, cheerio. Let's go. Why not? Why not?

Q: So upaya...

VR: What have we got? Yeah, upaya...

Q: Upaya on one level is recognizing, continuing to recognize and then going on with it, really doing it. Is that what you mean?

VR: Yeah, that's what I mean. You know, you do recognize... Good point [snaps], sharp, absolutely sharp, you recognize it and then don't pull back. Just go with it, go with it. This is a thing! [slaps microphone] Sound, hearing, smelling, taste, the whole sense organs are actually real. That's what's called the vajrayana. There is no point any more in who I am or what this is. It makes no difference any more, it is what it is. And if you move it away, [moves microphone away] [inaudible] if you bring it back, it does. And do you know why that works? Because it's shunya, empty of any kind of meaning, individualistic meaning, so we can actually do it that way. Well, don't get too excited, ladies and gentlemen. I'm not talking about any kind of jumping off a cliff or jumping onto railroad tracks or whatever. I'm simply saying that things are simple, things are very simple. If you think you can affect the world, then you are mistaken. If you think you cannot affect the world, then you are also mistaken. So let us just simply do it. No philosophy. If there is philosophy, we are in a bad strait, absolutely bad strait. We have no point in living. You know, nobody found any purpose in living. [laughter] There is no philosophy, you know they say, "I am this, therefore I am this and I'm this and I'm this and I'm this and I'm that." The only people who actually had any point of view were the Buddhists and they say existence is the same as space. What are the qualities of space? Non-dual, yeah, we talked about that, unborn, unoriginated. So, therefore there's no purpose to being alive, and what we're talking about now is—since there's no purpose to being alive, what's happening? Right? What's happening? Nothing is happening, but it's happening quite vividly. [laughter] Therefore we don't need to stop it. We don't have to stop anything that's going on here. There's a man in the back, all the way in the back, with a blue, short-sleeved shirt.

Q: If you give up all your reference points, how do you choose a teacher?

VR: Oh, too late. Too late. You don't give up all your reference points and choose a teacher.

Q: So are you choosing a teacher when you still have reference points?

VR: Yeah. And then your reference points drop away and you wonder who the teacher is. [laughter] Let's... I'm serious.

Q: So am I.

VR: You don't choose a teacher by giving up your reference point. I mean, you know, let's be honest. You choose a teacher because something happens. Which is a reference point.

Q: So choosing a teacher is just a matter of attraction?

VR: Basically, yeah. Basic attraction. Do you know what that is?

Q: Could you explain it?

VR: Sure. It's beyond thought. It's something that happens that you can't explain. And later on you explain it, which I have done for the past five years, myself, which, if it happens to you, you will do yourself. People say, "How did you come to meet, uh, X twenty-two?" Well, I was walking down the street one day... What are you trying to say, by the way?

Q: I think what I'm trying to say, is that, if you're making a decision about a teacher...

VR: Who you, absolutely never, never. Forget it.

Q: Forget what?

VR: You never make a decision about a teacher.

Q: What happens?

VR: You fall in love. You can never make a decision about a teacher.

Q: You told me, about seven lectures back, that there was no love.

VR: Did I tell you that?

Q: Uh huh. You said there was only compassion.

VR: Well, there wasn't, seven lectures back. [laughter] You should follow this stuff, you know, I mean it's quite logical. It is. It's quite logical. The only time you can ever fall in love is when you have nothing to hold onto as your personal possession. You can't find a teacher, you can't actually unite one-to-one with a teacher if you have your property. No way. Did I say that?

Q: I didn't hear you. What did you say?

VR: Did I say that?

Q: Yeah, you did.

VR: Seven lectures ago? I only gave three, how could it be seven lectures ago?

Q: It was last semester.

VR: This is the fourth one.

Q: The first part of the summer.

VR: Oh, last semester. What did I say?

Q: I asked you, I read you a quote, and I asked you what the Buddhist meaning of love was.

VR: And I said?

Q: And you said that since love didn't exist we had compassion.

VR: So much for memories. [laughter] What shall we say right now? What is your question right now?

Q: Well...

VR: About the teacher... We're talking about the guru, right?

Q: My question is that—having to do with my personal experience of these particular teachings—there's a number of things that are very right and I'm not saying that I don't know where they're coming from, maybe it's that bottom line thing you were talking about, just feels like that's it, it's right there. And then there are a number of things about the situation in the community which feel very wrong.

VR: Oh! We're getting very complicated, getting very complicated. Let's start from number one.

Q: Right.

VR: All right, go ahead.

Q: What feels right?

VR: Right or wrong, number one, first question.

Q: Okay, the thing I said, there are a number of things that feel very right and what feels very right are, the books make a lot of sense, they hit me like this is what I, it's appealing to what...

VR: Right.

Q: ... whatever, I don't know, it just feels like it's there.

VR: What's second thing?

Q: Sitting feels like it's there.

VR: Sitting's good.

Q: Yeah, sitting's nice. [laughter]

VR: Third thing. No third thing?

Q: Seems like there's really nothing else to do besides this.

VR: Ah. Oh. Really?

Q: Really, every time I think about leaving this, or going away from it, it's like... [noise like microphone dropped, or VROT hitting his mike]

VR: There's more to it than that. I mean there's, look at all these people around here..

Q: Yeah, I'm just telling you my personal experience...

VR: I'm... that's what I'm telling you mine as well. Look at all these people around here.

Q: Right.

VR: Yeah.

Q: Well I'm not doubting all these people around here. I'm...

VR: Who cares about what you're doubting, I'm just telling you, look at 'em.

Q: What's that have to do with number one, number two, and number three?

VR: That "what" has number one, number two. You have good books, they say good things. You have good practice, it does good things. Then you have good people, what do they do? [laughter] This is Naropa Institute, what does it do?

Q: Right. Well, the people and the situation doesn't hit me in the same way that the books and the sitting does.

VR: That's it. Well, we were trying to say that all the while. And books first, sitting, you know. Books is like learning how to eat from a spoon, you know, put spoon in mouth. Sitting is learning that you have a hand which goes on the spoon, goes in the mouth. Yeah. People is not only the spoon in mouth, but there is a bowl, and somebody gave it to you. Right? Somebody put something in the bowl, then you eat it. And then what's called Naropa Institute, which is kind of like a big kitchen. All the bowls are presented to eat, but it has nothing to do with what we're talking about tonight. I mean, tonight it's just, you know, I'm talking about how you can cut your hair and lose your T-shirt and fly into space like Superman. [laughter]

Q: What's the difference if I lose my T-shirt if I just substitute it with a three-piece suit?

VR: No difference at all.

Q: So why should I be interested in losing my T-shirt?

VR: I don't know. Why should you be?

Q: I'm not. It fits well.

VR: Well, there we are. That's good. Have a good time.

Q: Okay, thank you.

VR: Meet you next time. Gentleman in the front. Put up your hand cause they won't see you. In the first, second row. Of the seated people. It's like a tennis tournament, the seated people.

Q: Are you afraid?

VR: Of what?

Q: Of me.

VR: No. [laughter] You want to get closer?

Q: Sort of.

VR: Go ahead.

Q: I'm afraid.

VR: Of me?

Q: I have fear, it's related to you.

VR: Of me?

Q: I think so.

VR: Well, let's look at me. What of me? What are me made up of? Suit, tie, white shirt, collar stays, maybe underwear, we don't know. Socks, shoes, hair. You 'fraid of me?

Q: I'm beginning not to be. [laughter]

VR: [laughs] That's great. Well, likewise. So, what is it?

Q: I wanted to know if you were afraid.

VR: No, no problem. No problem. Anybody else? Behind you, dear. There he is!

Q: Um, understanding that everything is nothing and that this microphone is just a thing and if it was radioactive and possibly could kill me, it doesn't matter because everything is nothing?

VR: [coughs] I beg your pardon. [laughter]

Q: What's that?

VR: What's what? Is there radioactivity in here?

Q: I don't know, but if there was, would it matter?

VR: I think we would die.

Q: Does that matter?

VR: To whom?

Q: To you.

VR: To me?

Q: Uh huh, if that microphone was radioactive, would you move away?

VR: Would I move away? It depends on how radioactive it was. [laughter]

Q: Radioactive enough to kill you.

VR: Like a snake?

Q: Like a snake?

VR: Yeah. Say that was a cobra. See the cobra?

Q: No, it doesn't look like a cobra. Say, say...

VR: Then I probably would move away, if it was a cobra, I would move away pretty fast, you know, or any snake, you know, it might be a garter snake, I would move away. What's that, radioactivity? And then you could say, "Well, we really don't know what radioactivity is." You know, I mean, it really is something. I don't know if it's something or not, do you? What is radioactivity? Do you know what radioactivity is? I have no idea, myself.

Q: Well, the hell with radioactivity.

VR: Good. The hell with it.

Q: My question is to the fact that, if you know something is bad for...

VR: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. How about if the whole world goes down with radioactivity?

Q: If the whole world was...

VR: Goes down. If we actually perish because of radioactivity. Would you say the hell with it?

Q: Well, you know, if that's what was happening, I'd probably have no choice.

VR: Ohh, yeah yeah. How about the Yankees lost yesterday?

Q: Yeah, um.

VR: If that was happening, somebody here could get up in the audience and say, "The radioactive level in this room is so bad that we are actually going to die in about, 45 minutes." You'd run like a bat out of hell, out of this room.

Q: Before, you said it didn't matter. Before, you said...

VR: Hey, it doesn't matter, but you would run like a bat out of hell if they said that, wouldn't you?

Q: I'm curious as to what you would do.

VR: I'd run like a bat out of hell out of this room. [laughter]

Q: Before you said it doesn't matter.

VR: It still doesn't matter. I'd still run.

Q: If it doesn't matter, why run?

VR: Because that's why. Because it doesn't matter. Let's run if it doesn't matter, let's run. Why are we making a big deal out of this?

Q: Wait a minute; so that you value your health.

VR: No, who cares about that. I value the run. If somebody said you're going to die, let's run. I mean, look. Let's get very serious about the whole thing, ladies and gentlemen, if you can at this point. You think you're alive, right? And then you think you don't? You think you're alive, and you're not? You think it's good and you think it's bad? What's real? Is the radioactivity level in this room real? Or is it real at Rocky Flats? Where is it really real? Where is the really real part of who we are? Here, or at Rocky Flats, or in the newspaper, or on the TV? Is it Pele retired from soccer? I mean, what's real, you know? The dollar has dropped? Pchew. We have risen up our inspiration. Pchew. Tonight. What is real? Let's get with it, what is real? All right, now. What is your question again? About the whole thing, the whole thing. We're going to run out of here very soon because I'm going to finish with this talk and I'm going to run the hell out of here. What's your question?

Q: I seemed to get the impression before that, to me, if someone was aiming a gun at me and about to shoot me, it would be a very real experience and it would...

VR: And then you'd be dead if they shoot.

Q: Right.

VR: Right.

Q: And I would duck.

VR: How could you? It's too fast. Don't be so silly.

Q: Well, if I had a chance...

VR: Don't be so silly. You know, if the son of a bitch stands up and shoots you in the head, you're dead. Don't be so silly. That's everybody's fantasy, everybody's fantasy, that you could duck. I mean forget it, you know, it's like, I mean, you're going to get rid of the radioactivity in Rocky Flats. [laughs] You're going to duck. You're going to get shot in the head. [comment from audience inaudible] Oh fuck you. I mean, you're finished. Get him out. Get rid of him, you know, he's too old, he's too old to be a poet. [laughs hard]

Q: Regent, regent.

VR: Yeah. What, what what?

Q: Hi.

VR: The Regent is still here.

Q: Are you still here?

VR: Absolutely.

Q: That's good.

VR: Yeah. Are you?

Q: The reason, well yeah, and the reason I'm here is because I've learned how to duck.

VR: Really? Really?

Q: Yeah, someone told me, if you jump out of an airplane you get hurt.

VR: Forget it. Forget it. Forget what they told you.

Q: Uh, that's not true?

VR: You can't duck. You can only stand up straight. Sit up straight. Yeah, that's it, like meditation posture.

Q: Right, but if I did this in the ocean I would drown.

VR: If you did this in the ocean, you would be extremely stupid.

Q: That's what I am talking about.

VR: Is that what you're talking about? You are sitting here on a bench! Why are you talking about doing it in the ocean? [Aside] Jesus.

Q: Well basically on one level, you see...

VR: Well we don't want to get this too far, you see, everyone's having a good time. I hope you all donated money to Naropa Institute. What?

Q: Well on the one hand, when it's convenient you seem to be...

VR: On the one hand, we are talking about what's called shunyata, which is the fact that you're sitting on that bench thinking you are in the ocean is valid. All right? On the other hand we are saying that you are actually on the bench, and you have a question which brings the two together. Now, please, ask me something sane. Please. Don't laugh. Let's get to it. What do you want to

say, about being alive—uh, don't ask him—about being alive?

Q: Well...

VR: Just say something to me. I'm sitting up here like whoever I am, you know.

Q: Well, being alive seems to be an important thing to me, and I watch...

VR: Why, why? Just tell me something about being alive. Never mind. Seems to be. Just ask me something if you want.

Q: Well, it seems like the longer I'm alive, the longer I have to realize who I am. And that's very important to me. And it seems that if you do things that are harmful to your body...

VR: How long have you been here in this Naropa Institute?

Q: About a month.

VR: I see.

Q: Yeah, and it seems that if you do harmful things to your body, it will stunt your, umm, spiritual advancement.

VR: Well, you find out what your body is.

Q: Well, I understand my body to some extent—to know that if I put a knife in it, it will bleed.

VR: How do you know that? Did anybody put a knife in it?

Q: Sure.

VR: Yeah? Somebody did?

Q: Yeah, I did, by accident. I saw blood come out.

VR: Oh, where, your finger tip?

Q: It hurt. Excuse me?

VR: Never mind.

Q: I'm curious also as to if there is a reason, as far as the teachings, or if there is just no reason why you—and you and—both Rinpoche...

VR: Come on, come on. You know, I'll tell you something. I'm a very impatient fellow.

Q: That's too bad. Patience is a virtue.

VR: It's really too bad. Extremely too bad. But let's get on with it, you know. Forget it. Somebody else, please.

Q: Well why can't I ask my question?

VR: This gentleman over here? Because you're full of shit, you're not saying anything.

Q: It's threatening to you.

VR: The blond hair. Get rid of that microphone.

Q: You turn me off when it's threatening?



VR: Yeah, turn him off. Get rid of it. Did you get rid of it? Because you're full of shit. Shut up. Yeah, but I'm talking over here, you're not. You didn't say one thing the whole time. You didn't say one thing the whole time. You have nothing to say. You have nothing to say.

Q: You have nothing to answer, obviously.

VR: That's right, because you have nothing to say, so shut up.

Q: You shut up.

VR: Okay. You shut up and I'll shut up.

Q: Hello, ah, I have just one question, and that is, is what you're saying that... I'm getting a horrible echo here.

VR: Sorry, everything's fine. That was him.

Q: ... that reality is nothing but what you feel?

VR: No, that's not what I'm saying.

Q: Okay, then I misunderstood.

VR: Reality is nothing but what you feel and what you don't feel at the same time.

Q: Okay, I see that. It doesn't really matter. It's just what exists.

VR: It does. No, no, no. It does really matter. [inaudible from previous questioner] Get rid of him. You know. Burn him up. [laughter] Light a match to him.

Q: Could you elaborate just a little bit on that for me.

VR: I did, I think, that the point of view of emptiness—which is not actually experiencing anything as oneself or other—is what's called shunyata.

Q: Simply experiencing.

VR: Simple experience. That is one simple experience. And then there arises from that, a sense of echo, or a sense of, kind of boundary of that, and that is what's called fundamental ego, that we take that boundary to be something. In the vajrayana we bring the two together, which is neurosis of being insulted like that gentleman in the back, or like me over here, which is same thing. He's saying to me, I'm saying to him—and you bring it together, which is space, of answering your question. It has nothing to do with him or me at this point. It has to do with you. So you bring the two together and you have clear seeing and space at the same time.

Q: Would that boundary that you were speaking of, would that constitute a relative point?

VR: Yeah, the boundary is a relative point, the sense of oneself is an absolute point. Oneself is nothing, boundary is something.

Q: You're just floating in the boundary, essentially.

VR: Oh come on. No no, don't do that. You can't float in the boundary.

Q: Okay, well, in essence you're in...

VR: Boundary means boundary, you know, like this is Czechoslovakia, this is... You can't float in the boundary. "Boundary" means, like, "this is my leg. This is my leg." How can you float in a

leg? You say, “This is a leg. I got a leg.” You know. “I got a got a hand which grips a mike,” and you say “There’s a mike.” Right?

Q: I’m thoroughly confused.

VR: Oh come on. Is everybody confused? It’s so simple, you got this... [noise of manipulating the microphone] I mean the whole thing is here, right? It’s all here, aw, what is it? What’s a mike?

Q: It’s a mike.

VR: Yeah. Yeah, but are you gonna go through? It’s a wire mesh in between this, this and this [indicates with rapid ascending scale] th th th th. Are you going to go through that? You don’t want to do that, do you?

Q: I’m just going to say it’s a mike. It does what it does.

VR: It’s a mike. It does what it does. Right. Okay.

Q: So, an experience just does what it does?

VR: That mike, right?

Q: Well, any, any experience that you...

VR: Any experience?

Q: It does what it does and that’s all that there is to it.

VR: Including you, right?

Q: That’s correct. Okay.

VR: Yeah. Okay.

Q: That answers my question. Okay, thanks.

VR: Oh oh, I’m sure it does. Anybody else want to jump along? Oh. Blondie over there, blondie with the...

Q: Vajra Regent...

VR: Yes.

Q: When we were talking last Thursday and the girl asked about delusion and confusion and all that being part of mind, but not a part of mind, and it ended up that confusion was part of mind, is the coming together that you’re speaking of tonight...

VR: That’s right.

Q: ... it’s the same thing?

VR: You see, what we are talking about is recognizing that delusion is a part of mind, then, as Rinpoche was talking about last week, recognizing that that delusion as part of mind has absolutely no basis whatsoever—there is nothing, there is nothing, there’s nothing. Now how do we recognize that there is nothing? You know, words are really true. People think that words are philosophical, you try to fit your words into your mentality. Let’s take these words right now. There is nothing. And fit it into your mentality. That’s what’s called, “being,” in vajrayana. That the words actually are true, as far as experience is concerned. You know, “Hello.” “Hello.” “How are you?” “I’m fine.

How are you?” There is nothing. Otherwise everybody would commit suicide. Do you see what I mean? Everybody would just take the pills or cut their throat, or jump off the... well not here. There’s nothing in Boulder—well maybe a few buildings in Boulder—to jump off. You know, you say there is nothing. But you see the whole point of view of vajrayana is, “There is nothing. Is.” Are we talking about anything at all? Are we talking about anything? Better hurry up, because I’m fading out.

Q: Okay.

Q: [inaudible, no mike] What about the tracks? [inaudible]

VR: Stuff it. Stuff it. Stuff it, Gregory, you don’t know what you’re talking about. Stuff it. Stuff it. That’s because you were there, that’s why they had the clubs. Right. Then why did you go there if the clubs were there? I didn’t put anybody down tonight. No. No I didn’t. Okay, that’s enough of that. You, you silly people, don’t get so silly.

Q: [no mike] You’re silly. You’re body’s nothing?

VR: Oh, that’s the same guy in the back. Okay. Give him the microphone again, we might as well go through the whole thing. You want to talk?

Q: Yes.

VR: All right, here it comes. Give him the talk. Because Gregory had a little thing and then it ignited the fire in the back. Okay. Listen, ladies and gentlemen, we have a very short time together, very short time. We have a little bit of leeway in this environment, so we talk about these things, and maybe we have a little bit of loudness and softness. Please don’t misinterpret that as beyond meditation practice. If you don’t practice meditation there is no point in discussing these things. Because I feel that you have practiced, then we can discuss these things, somewhat. I don’t want to leave before me a dirty space.

Q: [inaudible, no mike]

VR: That’s what I’m talking about. That’s why I don’t want to leave a dirty space. That’s why I don’t sit on the tracks. I have before me an excellent person who is to speak, as you have heard. I don’t want to leave a pile of, uh, shit, which nobody knows is shit or not. What do you say, sir?

Q: I understand that everything is nothing as far as the ego manifests.

VR: Now wait a minute, wait a minute, please. I’m getting carried away.

Q: I understand. My question seems to me very to the point, very simple. What is the problem with you? I understand everything is nothing where the ego is involved. Where the ego is involved, everything seems to be something. When you lose your ego, everything is nothing. It simply is.

VR: You’re looking at me, right?

Q: Excuse me?

VR: Sorry.

Q: Is that true?

VR: What?

Q: When you lose your ego everything simply is. Something and nothing are both the same.

VR: [sighs]

Q: Right. Your body isn't related to your ego. Your body is.

VR: [laughs]

Q: Why do you find this amusing?

VR: Because I can't answer you any more. That's the end of it.

Q: Why? I mean, if you can't answer me, there must be something blatantly stupid about my question...

VR: And blatantly stupid about me, as well.

Q: Cheers.

VR: You think so? You think so?

Q: Well you know, I mean, you're not answering my question, so maybe we're both stupid, or...

VR: I actually can't. Can't.

Q: Why can't you?

VR: Because I really don't know what's happening. The whole thing, you know. You said something about body? Say it again, please.

Q: Your body houses your mind.

VR: Does it?

Q: Right now it is.

VR: How do you know?

Q: I see it.

VR: See your body housing your mind?

Q: Well, I see a mind manifesting into speech, coming out of a body.

VR: You see a mind? Oh, come on. Come on. Come on. Come on. I'm going to leave in about a few minutes, but I would like to know the description of the mind as you see it, from your body. Describe to me that the mind that manifests from your body. Just describe it to me.

Q: Well, actually, I understand consciousness to not be dependent on your body. But the point is, is you have one—right now—and all I was trying to find out...

VR: Who does?

Q: All I was trying to find out was if it should be looked after or not, if it matters or not?

VR: Look after it.

Q: Why?

VR: Who knows why? Are you going to look after it?

Q: I'm going to try.

VR: How?

Q: By avoiding things that might be hazardous to it.

VR: Which are hazardous to the mind. Which things are hazardous to the mind?

Q: Nothing is hazardous to the mind.

VR: Then how are you going to look after it?

Q: The mind?

VR: Yeah.

Q: It doesn't need looking after.

VR: Well then what the hell are you talking about?

Q: A very, a very non-important thing—your body—which I'm trying to find out if you think is important or not.

VR: Oh, I see, well I tell you what you do: take vitamin B.

Q: Why?

VR: Because you'll look after it. And eat only grains, organic grains, absolutely. And don't eat any fruit that is sprayed, definitely, definitely don't. And if you can avoid it, don't eat meat. Meat is the worst. It has what's called uric acid, it'll get you in the legs. Don't do that. Don't do that. And above all, don't drink anything alcoholic.

Ladies and gentlemen, practice very hard. See you at the end of the whole thing. And, if you make it, good luck.