Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin

Cultivation Of Enlightened Mind
Talk 2

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Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin: Continuing our discussion of last evening, talking about cultivating enlightened mind. We continue in the sense that we, at this point, should describe what we mean by enlightened mind in terms which are accessible and which provide some kind of basis for our own experience of meditation.

As we said last night, developing some kind of theory, developing some kind of intellectual understanding, we begin the process of uncovering our own ignorance. These descriptions of enlightened mind have been passed down from those lineage holders who actually have experienced that mind. The point of describing such a mind is not so much that we as practitioners should try to imitate that description, but rather, as we continue along in our journey, that description becomes a confirmation of our own experience. So, in terms of enlightened mind, we could say there are three categories, three basic descriptions. The first quality of enlightened mind we could call steadfast, or unwavering, which is accompanied by peacefulness. The second category can be described as expansive, which is accompanied by a sense of joy and also compassion. Compassion in this case is total generosity. And the third quality of enlightened mind is brilliant, which has the quality of power and omniscience.

So those are the general categories which we'll be working with in our discussion for the next few days. And in pursuing our discussion, we have three areas, again, that we can apply to each of these descriptions of enlightened mind. The first being the obstacles to that particular enlightened mind. The second, the application of practice, and the third the result of that application.

We begin with the obstacles specifically, because, as we talked about, the whole process of awakening, waking up, realizing who we are, what we are, is, again, a matter of uncovering that which is already there. So our starting point and our basis for any kind of spiritual practice or any kind of spiritual technique, technique of meditation, is applying that technique to those misconceptions and preconceptions which exist. As we said yesterday, it's not particularly important to question why they exist; they exist because we experience them as such, and as we so skillfully pointed out yesterday, if there were no problem there would be no discussion. But since we have some kind of question, we continue on the path.

So let us take this evening the first section, which is steadfastness, and the obstacles to that kind of mind are again the three. (It would probably be good if you took notes from now on, by the way. Sorry I didn't tell you about that earlier.) And those three categories of obstacles are ignorance and

dullness and laziness. And this particular kind of ignorance we're talking about, in this case, is that sort of secondary ignorance which we briefly touched on last night. It's not simply that basic ignorance of ignoring enlightened mind, but it's ignorance which compounds itself. In other words, it's a sense of stupidity which is extremely stubborn. Sense of ignoring which is so frightening and so total that it begins to take on qualities. Ignorance begins to take on qualities. And what are those qualities? Those are dullness and laziness. Dullness is being content to be ignorant continually. So much so that the basic qualities of mind are obscured by that dullness. In other words, that is to say, repetitive quality. Dull. Without any spark. And laziness is further expansion of dullness, in that case not even considering that dullness to be anything, to be any obstacle. So therefore becoming extremely stuck, lazy.

Overcoming dullness doesn't even enter into it. In fact, it starts to smooth out like a big mountain of honey and oozing all over the place, thick and complete. Because of that we have the situation, individually and environmentally, of confusion and fear. We're talking about fear in a prethought level almost, abstract level of fear at this point. Fear which doesn't even have a concept to it, doesn't have a description, which I'm sure everybody has felt. You could call it, at this point, anxiety and all the rest of it. It's kind of a basic fear of the notion of who you are. That kind of fear and confusion gives the picture of a world in which there are friends and enemies, hate and love, attraction and repulsion, good guys and the bad guys. And based on that total confusion we begin to elaborate and develop a totally ignorant mind, and that which classifies and judges and sets up defenses and attacks of all kinds about who's who and what's what.

Now, if we were to go into the extent of that kind of classification and categorizing, we could spend days and days and days, maybe months, maybe forever. And what does that actually mean? It's political, it's religious, it's philosophical, it's practical, it's impractical, it's all the rest of it. Governments, labor unions, choice of draperies. Relationships, love, hate, family problems, it goes on and on and on. In fact it permeates this world so thoroughly that we could say that this world as we know it is cradled in that kind of confusion and fear.

So, according to the Buddhist teachings, one applies a particular discipline to that kind of mind. And that discipline is known as shamatha and vipashyana meditation, which you have been practicing, some of you for a long time, some of you yesterday, whatever. Some of you never. And some forever. In any case, the shamatha and vipashyana practice of meditation is applying the techniques of sitting practice to that sense of ignorance and dullness which exists in our basic framework, basic samsaric mind. Samsara means confusion in this case, basic confused mind.

To uncover enlightened mind, awakened mind, it is necessary to apply some kind of healing material to begin with. Now when we talk about uncovering here, we're not talking about completely uncovering, we're talking about just uncovering our basic ignorance and stupidity, dullness. So the first aspect of applying the teachings is applying some kind of soothing balm, some kind of healing medicine, good medicine, which is not too toxic, not too strong and not too weak either. Just kind of steady treatment, steady medicine, good medicine, which is the practice of shamatha and vipashyana meditation. Shamatha means development of peace, of peacefulness; vipashyana, development of insight.

That basic sitting practice is, again, cultivating ignorance in the sense that shamatha practice and vipashyana practice have no particular promise, and even the technique itself, as you know, has no focal point. It's a non-centralized technique which doesn't focus on either this or that, either

friend or enemy, meditator or meditation practice. It is a technique which actually employs the enlightened mind from the point of view of recognizing spaciousness. That's our first contact with enlightened mind—is recognizing spaciousness. Which is done by the breathing technique, breathing because it's simple and a fact that you do breathe, and also because breathing in the way it's taught here is not breathing for any particular purpose—deep breathing from the diaphragm, the hara or whatever it is, or fast breathing to arouse kundalini or anything like that—just simple breathing, just breathe the way you breathe and let your breath go out into space, let it dissolve, come back, go out again, shamatha practice. Vipashyana practice in this case means having steadied that technique, so that you're no longer upset by your thought process and your emotions. Then there's the possibility of the actual breath itself becoming more spacious to the point where you begin to trust that which comes back to you in the form of your own thought process. You get that? What generally happens in the process of this technique is that you immediately distrust your thought process, which is very good and necessary because it is based on some kind of preconception and fantasy. But as you begin to practice and stabilize the technique so that you actually become breath and there's no two—there's no meditator and meditation—then at that point you actually begin to trust more so that what occurs in your thought process you have a slight sense of generosity toward, so that when the thoughts that occur begin to wake you up rather than put you to sleep—that's the vipashyana practice. In other words they bring you back to the sense of reality of being here without any kind of allegiance to this or that, whatever comes up in your mind.

So that kind of healing process also becomes an awakening process at the same time. But first it's necessary to calm, first it's necessary to create some kind of neutral ground. If we threw in all kinds of concepts and meditative possibilities at this point then it would just be adding garbage onto garbage. And at that point you could never make friends with your thought process at all, or your past, your future, who you are. You would simply be adding the spiritual description on to the other descriptions.

So, having applied that practice of shamatha and vipashyana, what is the result? The result comes in certain descriptions here. First is clear thinking. What is clear thinking? Clear thinking is not thinking clearly about what you think, particularly. Clear thinking is not involved with the type of thoughts that you have. Whether you consider them good or bad is not at all important here. Clear thinking is, you can actually distinguish, for yourself, the process of thinking. The way a thought arises, how it dwells, how it disappears in your mind's sphere. Who you are. The benefit of that is that what you think no longer becomes the friend or the enemy—which is our problem, as we know, all along. We think, and our thinking process gets so stirred up that it becomes emotional. Emotion is the high point of thinking and it becomes so emotional that it becomes ignorance again. That's the process. So by creating that neutral ground of shamatha-vipashyana you begin to see how thoughts occur, where they dwell, how they dissolve. Clear thinking. That clear thinking at the same time has no judgmental quality into good and bad, just how thoughts emerge, so you think clearly.

Second one is vividness. And that vividness occurs in the realm of sensual experience, realm of the senses, that the dullness previously experienced is suddenly woken up and you see orange, gold, blue, hear the sound of the bird, hear the sound of the tractor going by, just clearly, distinctly, as it is. Again, the same as with the thoughts, the sensual experience has no particular judgmental quality either. It's just clearly distinguishing the sensual input, sensual experience that we have.

What is the point of that? What's the benefit of that? In that isolating the sensual experience, and sensual experience becoming vivid, actually again serves to wake one up further, that orange reminds one of being awake. The process sort of is double-edged in terms of the senses. Hearing a sound, it's crisp, clear. Just like clear thinking, it's clear perception. So again we begin to wake up.

Next one is orderliness. Because the thinking process and the sensual experience are distinct and without reference in terms of good and bad then we begin to feel some sense of order. Order means, in this case, not being confused about where to put your toothbrush when you go visit your friend, whatever it is, not being confused about how to drink a cup of tea, not being confused about what to wear if the weather is cold. Sounds very mundane, but actually happens all the time. That kind of order begins to take place in one's world. And that order is, again, a further sense of waking up, because once you appreciate that sense of orderliness, then the world itself is less threat. We begin to see that there is order in all of it, that the confusion was our confusion.

And next category is simplicity. Because of the other three, things are not complicated. I don't want to say too much about that because that's a very loaded word, and you figure it out for yourself.

And the last one is basic trust in one's own mind. That is where the experience of one's practice begins to connect with the experience of one's being, who one is, who we are. We no longer feel that discursive thought and strong emotion and visual or sensual perception or chaos in our life situation is a problem, because we trust, through our experience, that what we have experienced is thoroughly true, that we are sane after all. We have a genuine sanity which goes through certain stages. We feel excited. We feel up. We feel down. We feel confused. Then we feel better after we were confused. We begin to see the process, the whole process that's going on with our mind and our life. And once we start to see the whole picture—beginning, middle and end without interfering with it—we develop certain trust in our own mind, that we're not crazy at all. In fact, we're quite sane. Therefore we have actually touched the doorstep of awakened mind, the first aspect of awakened mind, which is basic trust and basic absence of threat because things are simple and direct, orderly, vivid and clear.

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

UESTIONS

Vajra Regent: Gentleman over here.

Question: Hi. Last night you left me with the advice to sit today, and that's what I did. I woke up early in the morning as soon as the bell rang, and I did...

VR: Good for you.

Q: And I sat every session, and I realized a few things about it.

VR: Did you write them down?

Q: Yeah, I did. The first one I realized was how hard it can be to sit for a whole day.

VR: How hard can it be?

Q: It was hard...

VR: Mmmm.

Q: ... for me, today, and painful, very painful.

VR: Yeah.

Q: The second thing I realized is that I am one of the worst sitters in Karmê-Chöling.

VR: [laughing] How do you know that? [General laughter]

Q: Because I didn't stop moving, and I even got complaints about it.

VR: Oh, you think people that don't move are good sitters?

Q: Well, I mean, all I can say is that I'm amazed at the people here, and the way they do sit.

VR: Yeah.

Q: And I'm amazed at the word that you used. I would describe this place, "steadfastness." Just amazed because I didn't have it, and everyone else seemed to.

VR: [Laughing. General laughter]

Q: And I'll even take this as far as you being late. I was at my wit's end, and everybody here was cool, I mean, calm... [General laughter]... they didn't... not a wink, you know, and I was...

VR: What's your name by the way?

Q: I'm Charlie.

VR: Hello, Charlie.

Q: And I was amazed. And I think this place... I think everybody... I just want to congratulate everybody.

VR: [Laughing. General laughter]

Q: I mean that... I can't do it. I'm not a good sitter.

VR: You, you'll be a good sitter.

Q: Well...

VR: Yeah. You have to start square one.

Q: But I do have a problem.

VR: Okay.

Q: Okay? And this is... [General laughter]

VR: What's that?

Q: This is my own neurosis that I'm bringing forth here. I came up here with...

VR: You're kidding.

Q: ... with two things, two things that I wanted to show you, and I've put it through my meditation teachers, and I've sent you notes, and I know that this will probably all, you know, work out, and that I would get it to you...

VR: [Laughing]

Q: ... but I'm so... I'm so neurotic that I...

VR: Go ahead. Go ahead, Charlie. Go ahead.

Q: I don't trust it.

VR: Okay.

Q: So I did a sketch for you and a poem that I wanted to give you. And I also have two sets of photographs of some ancient, rare Tibetan art that I brought up to show you, and, as a matter of fact, show anyone who is interested in this collection.

VR: Where are you from?

Q: Originally I'm from New York, but...

VR: Where do you live now?

Q: In Boston.

VR: In Boston. What do you do in Boston?

Q: Well, I'm in the middle of transition. I'm going to be moving back to New York. I just quit my job, and I... [General laughter]

VR: You quit your job?

Q: Excuse me?

VR: You're moving to New York?

Q: I'm going to be moving back. I just... I was going to night school, and I have finals. As a matter of fact I was going to say that I'm going to be going tomorrow. So...

VR: Uh-oh. Why are you going tomorrow?

Q: Because I have a final Tuesday night, and I haven't done any studying all semester.

VR: What's tomorrow? Sunday. Oh, too bad.

Q: I know. I was going to say that, you know, last night I sat over there. Tonight I sit over here...

VR: You're going to sit over there.

Q: Tomorrow I'll be gone. [General laughter]

VR: You know what? Tomorrow when you'll be gone... right?

Q: Right.

VR: I'll still be sitting over here. [Laughter]

Q: That's right.

VR: Yeah. Well, you take it. And you know what? There's a Dharmadhatu in New York. You could practice meditation there.

Q: Okay. Thanks.

VR: Good. Sure. Yeah.

Q: Thank you. Um... just, I hate to be neurotic. What should I do with the sketch? I...

VR: Oh. There's a gentleman here called Mr. Michael Root. He's my private secretary, and just give it to him, and I'll get it. And leave your address.

Q: Okay.

VR: Yeah?

Q: And with the pictures. I don't know what I should do.

VR: Well, something will happen but, you know...

Q: Okay. I was going to suggest that tonight afterward maybe I'll have them in the library for anybody that wants to see them.

VR: Good. Okay. Anybody want to see the pictures they'll be in the library. Yeah. What are they?

Q: Oh, there... well, there's two sets. One is very rare, shrine set, very rare, of Tibetan woodcarving, hand-carved, wooden tathagatas, and the others are a set of thangkas, very ancient also.

VR: Good, okay. Anybody wants to see them. So you go to Dharmadhatu in New York. It's a good place, has a good shrine room, and the people sit.

Q: I really just appreciated the interchange between... the exchange between you and Charlie, and, at the same time, there's some envy because...

VR: Because he's leaving? [General laughter]

Q: What?

VR: No, sorry.

Q: I've enjoyed him very much.

VR: Enjoyed Charlie?

Q: My feelings of envy came because last night all of the questions came from men.

VR: Now they come from you.

Q: Um...

VR: What's your question?

Q: Yeah. I'm concerned about that because...

VR: Well, give me a question, then we won't have any concern. Just give me a question.

Q: I would like to have some relationship with you.

VR: What do you have in mind? [Laughter]

Q: I don't know, really, okay? And I don't know how to put something to you as a question...

VR: How long have you, how long have you been, how long have you been here? Practicing.

Q: I've been practicing here since August. I've been coming up regularly. I've been practicing...

VR: What's your name? What's your name, by the way?

Q: Marianne Nichols.

VR: Uh huh. Where do you live, Marianne?

Q: Just an hour away.

VR: In where?

Q: In Norwich, Vermont.

VR: Norwich. Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

VR: I know Norwich. It's a nice place.

Q: Yeah.

VR: Well, good. All right. We should talk privately then, I think. But, you know what I mean. [Laughter]

Q: I will. We will. I'm taking refuge vows.

VR: Uh huh. Well, we should anyway. It's much better than... We can't quite establish a relationship right now.

Q: No, I understand that, but I still feel somewhat...

VR: Well, it's okay. Just...

Q: No.

VR: Did you request an interview?

Q: Yes.

VR: You did?

Q: Well, not a special interview because I knew that taking refuge vows involved seeing you. Is that right?

VR: Not very much. Just... not very much. Oh, well, who's your meditation instructor?

Q: Willie.

VR: Oh. Well, you should tell Willie, you know. You definitely should have an interview.

Q: I will.

VR: Yeah. Then we can have some further chat.

Q: But you still... Okay, I'll put it as a question. I think that it wasn't coincidence. I think that there's a... there was some reason why just men asked you questions last night. I don't know why...

VR: More guts.

Q: But I would... I'll ask... what!? [General laughter]

VR: [Clicks fingers twice] Men are more intelligent than women...

Q: I'm not so clear that the words... What? I missed that too.

VR: ... either that or more ignorant. [Laughs]

Q: I'll have a lot to talk to you with.

VR: [Laughing. General laughter] There's no women who asked questions last night? No?

Woman in audience: I did.

VR: Oh, you did. It's purely coincidence. Anybody else? Man or woman. Or whatever you might be thinking. [Laughs] All right. Go ahead, Mary.

Q: I have a question about orderliness.

VR: Mm-hmm. [Laughter]

Q: How the orderliness that results from practice... how far does it extend beyond sort of knowing where to put your toothbrush? Does it extend into...

VR: Well, I think it goes basically to one's own personal environment. I wouldn't say that it goes beyond that.

Q: Not into political ideologies or anything like that?

VR: No. I don't think so. I think it goes into one's personal environment, that our basic confusion starts on a personal level. You know, it's as simple as a matter of having a clean apartment, you know, and a straightforward... not only clean, but clean in the sense of sharp and distinct, that kind of orderliness. It wouldn't be the kind of orderliness that tries to clean up New York City, Second Avenue or something like that. I think that we'll go into that tomorrow.

Q: Is there a talk tomorrow?

VR: Isn't there a talk tomorrow? Yes. There's a talk tomorrow.

Q: Oh, goodie!

Q: You mentioned something about steadfastness...

VR: I sure did.

Q: And nonwavering.

VR: Yeah.

Q: Those things kind of imply to me a closed mind, in a way. I mean "this" is what you think, and you go on that path, and you close out everything...

VR: No. It has nothing to do with what you "think." It has nothing to do with what you "think." The basic point of practice is... is that when you actually begin to practice shamatha meditation that you've been doing here—right?—that wavering simply means you can't really stick to the technique because the technique is like an intrusion on ignorance. The image is a candle, a flame of a candle unobstructed by the wind. That's the image. Think of that. That's the kind of mind we're talking about. Steadfastness in that way. It's not a matter of "thinking" that you have to go one way.

Q: It's not a matter of being closed to other possibilities, which is what causes me personally to...

VR: It has nothing to do with possibilities at all. Possibilities are what we eat all the time as, as

just junk food. Has nothing to do with possibilities. Has to do with some kind of basic state of mind which does not waver. Possibilities come and go. That's not important.

Q: Perhaps I'm connecting this up with a goal. If I decide that I should build a house a particular way, and I want to be steadfast about that and nonwavering, I will do it that way no matter what anybody else says or what other people... you know, that sort of thing.

VR: Can you do that?

Q: No. And therefore I waver, because I see all these other possibilities as well.

VR: That's what I mean about possibilities. They come, and they go. It's not a matter of simply taking that particular example, of, "I would like to do this. Therefore, if I, if my mind is steady, I will do this no matter what anybody says." That's a little bit naive in a sense. It's a question of beginning to see how transparent one's own affiliations are. We're affiliated with this. We're aligned with that. We suddenly feel good about this, then the next day we feel bad about that. Once you begin to see how transparent that is then you begin to develop some sense of not wavering, steadfastness. Which doesn't mean you're stubborn, it means you're directly on to it, whatever it is you're onto.

Q: Thank you.

Q: You were... you were talking about... about thoughts turning into emotions...

VR: Mm-hmm.

Q: ... and then emotions turning into, into, ignorance.

VR: Mm-hmm.

Q: How does that work, from the emotions into ignorance?

VR: Well, in this case, what we're talking about is like the full cycle of how we maintain ignorance.

Q: Uh huh.

VR: Starting off by basically ignoring who we are, not acknowledging being awake, in a very, very basic level, then, going from that to thinking which starts off just like a little dot on a page. Blank page with little dot starts off as a little thought. Thought starts to have bigger proportions, starts to be bigger dot. It goes to the point where it actually returns itself to ignorance, fully blown. It perpetuates itself, in other words. So that's how it becomes ignorance again. So that... primary ignorance, secondary ignorance and final ignorance.

Q: Uh huh.

VR: That make any sense?

Q: Yeah, I think so.

VR: Well, just follow when you sit. You'll see the whole thing. When you sit, you see the whole thing.

Q: Okay.

VR: That'll do it. Most difficult thing to do is to do nothing at all, which is sitting practice, just like that basic stupidity I was talking about, applying stupidity to how smart we are. Right?

Q: Applying...

VR: According to our point of view—as ignorant and confused and fearful people—to sit without hope or fear is, you know, impossible. Something has to come up. So then, we start to deal with what comes up, and how we deal with that, and... [Recording is interrupted.]

Q: You said that when we, when we become one with the breathing, then we begin to trust what comes back to us as thought process. Is that the same as seeing where they arise, where they dwell?

VR: Mmmm. What I said was we begin to trust the thought process that comes back to us—as thought process.

Q: Just, but that's not, that's not the same as the clear-sightedness where we're observing... I mean it seems like...

VR: It's slightly more than just observing, you know. It's actually having trust that when you begin to think, and that thinking actually produces an idea, a further idea, produces a picture... right, you have a discursive thought, then you have pictorial thought... yeah, it starts as a word then becomes a picture...

Q: Mm-hmm.

VR: ... further becomes a picture, becomes emotional involvement with the picture, all that stuff, that you don't actually distrust that, in the sense that it's going to devour you, but it's basically transparent and actually has something more to teach, your whole thought process, something more to teach all the time. So you don't get stuck in being the best meditator that ever didn't move his finger, or her finger, sorry, about the whole thing.

Q: That's okay. Thank you. [Laughter]

Q: Hi.

VR: Hm.

Q: Um...

VR: How!

Q: I'm from an hour south of here too. It's catching. When you said we no longer—in regard to basic trust in one's own mind—we no longer feel that whatever we experience is a problem that we experience it, did you mean that only within the context of our sitting practice or...

VR: Oh. I mean beyond that.

Q: ... beyond that?

VR: Because the context of your sitting practice, again, it's like applying medicine to a wound.

Q: Uh huh.

VR: It doesn't only get better when you apply the medicine, but there's a process beyond that. Basically when you're sitting it's more clear. When you're not sitting, it's less clear, but you still feel that sense of recuperating.

Q: Yeah, it seems to be...

VR: Not as much.

Q: ... somehow logical.

VR: Not as much.

Q: But do you mean... when... do you mean it's... when you say, "seeing the whole picture without interfering in it," that we... distrust is also like not arguing with our situation?

VR: Let me, oh, oh, that's a good point. Yeah. Let me just make it quite clear, okay? When you begin, there's a kind of two-way mirror that occurs in our practice and who we are. When you begin to stabilize shamatha, so that the actual practice is completely adhered to, then you begin to stabilize life situation as well. It's double... double mirror, in that sense. See what I mean?

Q: Ahhh?

VR: It's very literal that way. We're talking about...

Q: Yeah.

VR: ... at this stage of training one's mind, of cultivating enlightened mind, shall we say, that at this stage we're talking about the most literal quality we could have to our mind, most literal quality, and that is unwavering, steady, doesn't waver from its basic ground, its basic seat. It is where it is always. Things come and go: thoughts, emotions, all kinds of things, environment and relationships and whatnot, but it doesn't waver from that basic sense of who we are. Just keep clicking into being awake—simple, no analysis, no description, just being clear and awake—that's what we're talking about tonight. And that kind of sense of stabilizing shamatha and vipashyana in that way reflects one's life in the same way.

Q: Yeah. Thank you very much.

VR: You're welcome. That's a good question. Because I meant to say that, but I couldn't say it unless you asked it, and there we have it. [Pause] That's a good point.

Q: I had a question about the difference between reflecting on your pain, which you talked about last night, in the sense of, you know, "Am I really feeling pain?" sort of check it out, and what you were talking about tonight in terms of seeing the orangeness of orange. It seems like there's some kind of reflective process that's going on in both those experiences.

VR: Mm-hmm, Mm-hmm.

Q: I'm sure there's a difference, but I don't...

VR: Uh uh.

Q: ... understand what it is.

VR: There isn't. Same reflective process.

Q: But I thought that was sort of unnecessary in terms of...

VR: Not really. It is absolutely necessary. How do you know you're meditating? You think you are. See, we're still uncovering ignorance. We're still cultivating ignorance. And the basic ignorance of the meditator is to begin to feel that he's meditating or she's meditating. That's your basic, you know, that's our basic stuff. When you begin to feel, "I got it! Now I got it. I did it right that time."

Q: But isn't it a process...

VR: You actually did do it right that time. You see what I mean? You're reflecting on that. You're reflecting on the fact that you actually did have it for a minute there, second, whatever it was.

Q: Well, it seems like that's a problem in terms of pain. If...

VR: Problem is a repetition of reflection, sure, reflecting on reflecting on reflecting.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

VR: Well, if you have the proper instruction—hopefully everybody got the proper instruction—is that when you sit, breath goes out, dissolves in space, goes out, dissolves in space. There's gap, goes out, dissolves in space. And then suddenly the thought comes up and says, "I got it, got it." Thinking, out, dissolve. "Got it again." Thinking, out, dissolve. No problem. Thinking, out, dissolve. [Laughter] Problem, lunch, cheese, I don't like the pumpernickel. As it goes, you know. [Laughter] Thinking, out, dissolve. That's kind of reflection in that way. You say, "I'm thinking," and then you say, "But I know I'm thinking." Right? And then you actually push that "know I'm thinking" out into space as well, just let it slide out, go out. That's how to do it, anyway.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

VR: Mmmm.

VR: Nuschke, Mike, Mike, give Mike the mike. Yes sir, Mike?

Q: I was wondering about the abstract anxiety or the abstract... uh...

VR: Ignorance. Yeah.

Q: Fear...

VR: Yeah.

Q: ... and whether that becomes more apparent with sitting, or whether that's also...

VR: Well, first is the abstract ignorance, then it becomes fear. Those two things go like that, by the way: ignorance first, and fear second. Now, what about it?

Q: Well, it seems that then after that it becomes more elaborated.

VR: Conceptualized.

Q: Right.

VR: Yeah.

Q: So with, maybe with sitting it would become more apparent, since you're sort of, maybe seeing through the elaboration somewhat, and then...

VR: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Is that any kind of, more, you know, sort of primary...

VR: No.

Q: ... thing? Just another thing.

VR: No, no. Anybody could do that. That's, that's not, that's not really even important, that things

become more apparent. That's just another thought. You know, people, Buddhist practitioners especially, like to take refuge in the fact that they feel more pain than other people, because they meditate. That doesn't matter.

Q: Thank you.

Q: A lot of times in my interactions with other people in the... not when I'm sitting but in the social sphere... I feel a lot of dullness in the interaction, or I feel a lot of contraction. I feel a lot of fear.

VR: Mm-hmm.

Q: And I never know what to do with that. I mean, if it's something to make friends with or something to cut through, you know, and cheer up about, you know, and a lot of times it seems impossible to cut through it, you know, it seems too big.

VR: Well, first of all, I wouldn't try and cut through it. I would actually try and just sit so much that one begins to feel—I mean, we begin to feel—who we are, in a basic sense. The relationship, in this case, how you deal with people in the world and whoever you know, I think it's sort of premature. When you have stabilized your sense of being, then, at the same time, you also stabilize your relationship. So, you should actually consider the rest of it, the same way you consider what happens to you continually in your meditation practice, in your involvement with this sense of who you are, is somewhat transparent. See what I mean? Try and find a cause for the whole thing, and you don't find one. The problem is we get so hung up on trying to find the cause that we perpetuate the result. So...

Q: Yeah, I understand that a little bit.

VR: Don't take it seriously. That's the point.

Q: But if... but that's something...

VR: If you're embarrassed and upset, and if you did the wrong thing, and you made the wrong move, don't take it seriously. Just experience it. Experience the sense of wrongness or rawness or rightness or fullness or emptiness. Whatever it is that you experience—sensually, mentally, physically—experience it specifically as it happens. Train your mind down to that very dot, which is what we're talking about tonight. That when that experience of emotion begins to arise, you experience it from the beginning right through to the end, without any sort of wavering whatsoever. What we normally feel was good, you know, or bad. Something begins to happen, and we... our memory starts to jive up right away, conjure up karmic thing, that this is the bad stuff, it's happening again. This is good stuff, I'm going to get it. You know. Whatever it is that occurs, we have to dump that good and bad business. Start to feel from the very beginning your heart tickling, your blood pulsing, your smell smelling, your sight seeing, your mind thinking, just as it is. Let it go as far as it can, and when it dissolves, something else begins, something else entirely. Therefore you begin to see what memory is, what past is, what karma is. When you start to understand what karma is—that's the continual process of being ignorant—start to see that it's actually empty, has no basis at all. Well, to do that you have to actually train your mind, which is meditation practice.

Q: Thanks.

VR: You're welcome.

Q: What you said tonight seemed to contradict that there's no ideal meditative state. In other words,

it seems like you're saying to follow the breath. If you were sitting on a cushion twenty-four hours a day every second, and do that same process as if that were a definite thing. Is that what you're saying? Or is there some, I mean, it seemed like a question of effort, too much or too little.

VR: Hmm. Well, I would actually strive to achieve some sense of priority and clear thinking. I would do that personally. And if it gave me a hard time as I tried to do that, then all the better, because then one's own fantasy about being the great meditator might come out, which would be nice, you know. It's much better to uncover the fantasy than to keep it hidden by some kind of a dullness.

Q: I don't get the connection.

VR: Well, then, you better ask another question.

Q: I can't think of one.

VR: You better get more direct with the question. Or should I ask you?

Q: Go ahead.

VR: Am I saying that it's better to be so intent on one's goal that one doesn't think of anything else? Is that what you're saying?

Q: No. That's not what I was saying.

VR: Well, what are you saying?

Q: Ah...

VR: According to your experience...

Q: ... little heavy-handedness in effort?

VR: Heavy-handedness in effort?

Q: Yes.

VR: Oh, I don't think so. I think I'm being easy. Really.

Q: Well, it's like a vulture, you know, on a prey. You're sitting over thoughts...

VR: Vulture! You're lucky! That's the easiest I've been, is vulture. It's not, at least it's not H-bomb.

Q: Well, I have no idea what an H-bomb is.

VR: Well, you have idea what the vulture is anyway.

Q: Well, yeah. You showed it to me.

VR: Well, I think I'd better go along with that anyway. Yeah, I do mean that. We have to be much more tight, even with the technique, much more tight.

Q: Is that just a matter of progression...

VR: Sure.

Q: ... over years?

VR: What years?

Q: Well, sure...

VR: Minutes.

Q: No, in years. I'm talking about teaching.

VR: No, I'm talking about experience. However you experience that, it should be straightforward. I'm not saying that you should beat yourself over the head if you don't follow the breath all the time, you know. Is that what you mean?

Q: Yes. That's what it sounded like.

VR: Oh, I see.

Q: It's like you had built up this heavy guilt trip about dragging yourself back to the cushion, and follow the breath. "Son of a bitch, if I don't do it, I'm going to..."

VR: Isn't that what happens?

Q: It doesn't seem that way, no.

VR: I think it's what happens. Whether we like it or not, we're still cultivating ignorance. And whether we frost, you know, put the icing on it and make it decorated with the nicer things of our feeling of actually being in dharmakaya and all the rest of it, still, thinking is thinking. I mean, you know, you don't have to feel oppressed particularly. I just, you know, am trying to tell you that, everybody, that it's actually quite a simple thing. These are the things that happen.

Q: I was just... I was just thinking in terms of a contradiction.

VR: Which one?

Q: Of, well, Rinpoche talking about not being, there not being any ideal state. And in, like, "Songs of Milarepa" he talks about non-...

VR: I'm not talking about ideal state. I'm talking about just what happens.

Q: Well, you're saying, you're talking about, you, I think you said that, something about really being there with the shamatha discipline.

VR: Yes, I did. I did.

Q: Yeah.

VR: You mean Rinpoche never said that?

Q: I've never heard him say it. Or read it. [Laughter]

VR: Never said, "Really being there with shamatha"?

Q: Maybe he did, but I didn't read it or hear it.

VR: Well, I think, I think at this point I could speak for him and say that one should really be there...

Q: Uh. Yeah, well, that's what you're supposed to do with it.

VR: ... really be there with the shamatha discipline, really. I think he meant that all along, even though, you know, maybe he was kidding. [Laughter]

Q: [Laughing] Well, we'll take your word for it anyway.

VR: Good. Take it all the way then.

Q: Well, I'll do my best.

VR: That's what he said too. I think that's what you're confusing between the two—that Rinpoche, as well as any other teacher of this particular lineage, including myself, always says exactly what the teachings say, and after that, "do your best." Doesn't say that if you're not like that, you'll become frozen into a rock somewhere, and, you know. But, we have to present...

Q: Um...

VR: ... have to present the state of mind which is actually possible to accomplish. The rest of it is, we get so upset if we, if we hear, if we hear the description of enlightened state of mind and we don't accomplish it, we get upset.

Q: Well, yeah, I know that from personal experience.

VR: Well, that's... that's not the point. The point, as I said from the very beginning of this talk, that description of enlightened state of mind, including practice, is that when it occurs to you, then you start to click, that you're not making it up, particularly. That's what people have experienced. As to how long it takes, well, how long is a minute? How long have we been here?

Q: Couple hours.

VR: Yeah. Couple hours.

Q: So, it's okay to be a vulture?

VR: From my point of view. [Laughter]

Q: Thank you.

VR: You're welcome. Well, Nancy.

Q: Could you say something about the difference between the, what you were speaking of as the confused categorizing, what's what, kind of choosing your drapes...

VR: Uh huh.

Q: ... thing, and the kind of discrimination that comes out of awareness, the kind of decision-making and choosing that goes on...

VR: Well, I think that...

Q: ... within our world.

VR: Yeah, I think that basically we'll talk about more of that tomorrow. But, there has to be some separation between the confusion that goes out of choosing one's drapes and not being confused at all. In other words, what we're talking about here is not the drapes or even choosing the drapes. It's that state of mind before you go to pick out the drapes. Okay? Tomorrow we'll talk about the drapes—how you pick the drapes out, and the whole thing, how you make gold and blue and red, everything like that, but we're talking about just simple state of mind which doesn't have the anxiety when you go to the drape shop, drapery, or to the bakery, or to the butcher, or to the movie, or to the museum...

Q: Doesn't have...

VR: ... the state of mind before you leave the house, you know, when you walk down the stairs. There's a state of mind already which is simple. That's what we're talking about. How to achieve that simple state of mind; just walking, step by step. Whether it's going to be good or not is not important. Okay? That's where we are in the transition of cultivating enlightened mind. Whether it's going to be good or bad is not important. But, we are awake to whatever occurs. That's the first step.

Q: Thank you.

VR: I think we should probably stop at that point, at the awake point.

I think there are some announcements. I have one first: I would like to encourage everybody in their sitting practice, that I hear everybody did it and has been doing it, and hooray for mother earth and all the rest of it. But, let's actually get, really click about the whole thing. Try and do it precisely, evenly, cleanly. There's nobody with a gun at your back or knife at your back, doesn't matter about that. But just have some trust in your own mind. Everything's going to go straightforward the way it is. And whether you feel discomfort or anxiety or elation or depression is not important. What is important is that you're here and you're doing it. That's the important thing, which, when you look at it, nobody's willing to do. It's amazing enough to give everybody a medal. But since, in Buddhism, we don't have any medals, particularly... We have medals?

Person in audience: [Inaudible]

VR: Oh. You want one. Oh, oh. Well, I'll tell you what... [Laughter] We can actually deserve and initiate our own medal, which goes along with the next two aspects of enlightened mind, which we'll talk about, which is sort of self-existing medal. [Laughter]

Well, we have some announcements, here, by Mr. Nichtern.