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VAJRA REGENT ÖSEL TENDZIN

“The Feast of Devotion”

Intensive Training Seminar (I.T.S.)

**Karme-Chöling
Barnet, Vermont**

September 3-7, 1976

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Talk One

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Talk Three

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Talk Five

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TALK ONE

SEPTEMBER 03, 1976

Well, welcome everybody to this I.T.S.—Intensive Training Seminar—called “Feast of Devotion.” This is a very interesting situation here. Everybody’s been studying a lot, study groups and workshops, and studying to become a devoted person. What is the true meaning of devotion? Practicing a lot, working hard, come up to Karne-Chöling and learn more about devotion. Well, maybe we have a problem there, but I’m not sure.

The general notion of devotion is that somebody possesses something really great, and that I could possibly get that something from this other person. So the object of devotion is highly valued. There’s some kind of fantastic, precious treasure that I could get if I do the right thing. If I could devote myself, if I could really understand devotion, that I could get that wonderful something that so-and-so possesses. In this case we are talking about the teacher. So from the ordinary point of view, you would say that devotion is a question of going after the highly-prized commodity. But there seems to be a problem there in that we are talking about, as Buddhists, talking about transcending ego, working with ego. So the concept of trying to possess something which is not ours is questionable.

But we do believe that there is some kind of help necessary, some kind of help to progress along the path, and that the guru possesses that knowledge which can help us. But is it possible that something outside of us can help us? Is it realistic at all to think that somebody outside can actually make us an enlightened person? I suppose we consider ourselves somewhat poor, miserable kind of wretches in some ways. And that if we could only get that thing, something, then we would be super men or woman, wonder women. We could

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handle the whole thing very well if we had that little something. If we could get it, then our lives could be run properly, fantastically, not just efficiently but with a kind of flair, and that people would like us because of that.

But we've all been practicing a lot and studying, and we've heard about such a thing as spiritual materialism. So we studied that and understood somewhat that we can't get something from outside. But yet we have this relationship of a guru, or teacher, and disciple—how to resolve that? That seems to be a dualistic situation. If we can't get anything from the guru, if he can't help us because he's outside, then how can we get any help at all? Can we get any help? But it seems that we need some help. So some kind of doubt creeps in. If we can't get anything from him, and yet we have to get some help, how do we work out this relationship of working with the teacher, the object of devotion?

Most of us have assumed that the lineage is an unbroken lineage of 2500 years. That here we are at Karame-Chöling, part of that 2500-year unbroken tradition, which has been passed on perfectly, accurately, and that we are going to hear the undiluted, true dharma. That's what we assume. Well, we would like to believe that, anyway. That up to the present day and the current lineage holder, and now some regent character is here, and supposedly the whole thing is quite complete, and we don't have anything to worry about. We're going to hear the real thing. Must be so.

But is that so, is it so? Or is it something that we just believe, some kind of myth? Well, I mean, things change, right? Society, times, change. Maybe things went wrong. Maybe there was some distortion here and there. And maybe the whole thing you are hearing tonight and have heard before is purely guesswork. Somebody made it up. Who's kidding who? Famous "who's kidding who?" Is it possible that such a thing could be? We would like to connect ourselves to the glorious lineage of 2500 years, but we're not quite sure if this is the same lineage that we read about and heard about. Maybe it's just a gigantic con job, the whole thing. Maybe the Buddha himself conned himself into enlightenment. How do we know? Well, we're willing to forgive even that. Maybe he did do that. And

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perhaps I can do the same thing if I follow it exactly the same way, then I can con myself into enlightenment. And yet we feel that's unlikely, not so.

So a certain kind of doubt creeps in. Maybe this Tendzin guy is just some sort of bureaucratic thing, so that original con job could continue. They put in little dolls along the way, all colored the right way, and they drink the right thing, and they wear the right ties, and so I suppose maybe they could be... Well, the doubt that arises in all of us is a very important part of our practice and relating to devotion, in terms of devotion. That doubt is the first gateway.

We've all been reading a lot, studying a lot, and practicing a lot, and we've heard the concept of spiritual materialism, the ideas about spiritual materialism, and we know about that, but still we have some doubt. This present lineage holder, maybe a lot of you never met him, maybe you have. And some of you met him and haven't seen him in a long time because you can't get an interview these days. Maybe the whole thing is just turning out to be a big fake, joke, façade of some kind. "Well, sure, I've practiced, and I know there is something there. I got instruction from someone here at Karma-Chöling and read all the books, and something feels different. But what about this teacher person, and now his friend sitting here?" Can we actually get help from someplace? Can somebody give us wisdom so that the whole thing is worked out properly, we can manage our lives every well? Doubt.

And we should not try, I don't think, to do anything about that doubt, try and get rid of it and gloss it over. That's a very essential part of the experience of devotion. Without the doubt, nothing could happen. Without the doubt, we would just be wind-up dolls walking along, hands together, saying that the whole thing is as it should be — "Rinpoche says."

The question of the con job is a very interesting one. Who's conning who? Are we being conned? Or is Buddha the original con artist? I think that that is a very crucial point in our experience of devotional lineage, experience of devotion, being conned. Because we can't be sure, can we? That somebody's actually presenting to us the original dharma, undiluted dharma, precisely, perfectly, no flaws. There's all kind of room for mistakes. So we're stuck, stuck

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with being conned and not knowing what to do about it. Believe the books, we could believe our experience, we say we will believe our experience. But we don't even trust that. That's, maybe that's right, but then again, there's this doubt that even our experience doesn't speak the truth. We could be just confused people, just walked in here with some sort of candy bar in front. Somebody said, "Go over there, you're really going to find out about yourself."

Being conned is very important, because we have no choice. We have absolutely no choice—we can't be sure. We don't know what is a one hundred percent thing or fifty percent thing or twenty-five percent thing or absolute charlatan joke. What can you do then? Doesn't seem to be any insurance policy here, certainly not tonight. Maybe a lot of hope on our parts that the whole thing will work out okay. Then we can be sure that Rinpoche did the right thing. We don't have any hope like that, we don't have any insurance policy. So because that, because that there's no assurance of who's kidding who, then we have no choice but to give in. Because of that, because there's no insurance, then we have to give in.

Well, sure, I'll give in. But if I give in, I would like to know certainly, certainly, surely, that there's some sort of organizational guidelines, that there's some contract which spells out clearly that, if I join this group, that it's definite that I'm going to turn out to be an enlightened person. I'm going to go the whole route, and because I can see that the contract is perfectly clear, with the whole path marked out for me, that at the end I'm going to be an enlightened person, then I'll give in. But nobody wrote that contract out, it doesn't exist. We keep looking for it. Maybe it's in the left drawer, right drawer, some place, the contract is there, and if I give in, it's going to be absolutely certain that I come out on the other end an enlightened person. Well, there's no such thing here.

Well, okay, maybe there's no contract, but somebody should at least acknowledge that I'm doing this. Maybe the executive committee should, Karme-Chöling should take a vote and say, "So and so gave in. And we feel good about that, so we put him on the 'given in' list, which you're going to put outside in the postmeditation hall: veterans Who Gave In." But we don't have that, either.

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There's no dotted line here, absolutely none. Not only are there no reassurances, there's no acknowledgement.

Becoming involved in the path of devotion, there's no acknowledgment that so-and-so, by name, has joined in by giving in. There's just a big long beach of grains of sand, little grains of sand, just little things, and there's millions of them, thousands of them. And you say you want to give in? Go ahead, join that, become one of those little grains of sand. Just a little thing, no different than the next. Maybe sparkles, maybe the other one sparkles a little bit less, little bit more. Who can tell? There's just so many of them.

And maybe you say, "Well, I came first. I was here in 1971. I have tenure, grain of sand tenure." Nobody cares about that. You came along with your baggage, the whole suitcase is loaded. You're carrying it along, and somebody said, "Just drop it over there. Join in." "Isn't there a registration book somewhere, so that I could actually say that I actually did it?" "No, nothing like that." Somebody maybe from behind gives you one of these [gestures as if pushing someone]. Push you over there on the beach, just insignificant little thingy. No credentials whatsoever, absolutely not. There's no niche [sic] on your gun, no monument, no nothing that you actually did it, you actually gave in. You're just invited to do so. If you want to do it, go ahead. You just become a part of that 2500 year old beach with all those grains of sand.

Well, okay, but isn't that blind faith? Isn't that just like any other stupid so-and-so, just march along to the tune, beat of the drum, march along? Well, maybe, but then there's the doubt. Then there's that awkward, clumsy feeling of not being sure that if you do jump in, that anything's going to happen at all, that you're going to change on bit, that you're going to become enlightened so-and-so, or enlightened, period. There's no assurance there, but there is an overriding feeling of uneasiness and uncertainty about doing such a thing.

This particular club, Karme-Chöling branch of this particular club, doesn't seem to have a list of honorable guests, the ones who died for our cause. We don't have such a list here. If it were so, then that would be blind faith. Then you'd be totally assured that if you signed your name on the dotted line, then

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you had finally made it and you were in the true bona fide situation. That's more like blind faith because there's some credential there of being the real thing. And therefore, I'll devote myself because it is the real thing. But nobody here is going to pat your back and say, "Don't worry about your doubt and your uncomfortableness [sic]. It's okay, you're in the real place now. You've come home. You've finally made it. Just brush those things out. Those little doubts, they don't mean anything." Who's kidding who? Back to who's kidding who.

We talked about our I.T.S. is called "Feast of Devotion"—feast. Well, before we have a feast, we have to find out if we have the appropriate setting for such a feast. Can we have a feast here? Do we have the table and a tablecloth, and napkins, and plates and whatnot? Let alone do we have the food—let's not worry about the food yet. Do we just have the room set up? Do we have the table? Do we have the tablecloth? Do we have the ground of devotion?

The ground of devotion in this case is everybody's doubt, everybody's giant con job. Without that, we can't go anywhere, we have no way to talk to each other. Otherwise, we could speak in old formulas and axioms—the ten best ways to be devoted. And say, "Have I reached number three? Yes, I've reached number three." So maybe all our studying and all our sitting and all our thinking and conceptualizing doesn't mean anything at all. Maybe not. Maybe we haven't even gotten close to that doubt of myself and that greater thing which I would like to get at. On the other hand, maybe we've been very honest with ourselves, extremely honest, and say, "Well, I'm not going to fall for any bullshit here. I want to hear the real thing." Will you know when you hear the real thing?

We have no choice, we already stuck our noses into this situation here with our whole mess of baggage along with us, our history, which we brought along with us. And we don't have any contract, we don't have any insurance policy, we don't even know that this character here, sitting here is, just arrived here. Who is he? He's—somebody said so. Somebody said he's so-and so. But still this little funny thing, little gnawing thing that we're not quite sure that that's so. But we don't have any choice.

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And that choicelessness of giving in is also the seed of true devotion and intelligent devotion, because there's no way to get rid of it, simply because of that. That you can't put on the appropriate robes and appropriate tie or suit and say that it no longer exists, I am certain, absolutely certain that this is it. I got my Brooks Brother's tie, and I've done it because everybody else seems to have done it that way. None of that. You're just stuck there with the whole thing—questions, doubts, uncertainties, and yet intense, intense longing to do something. We have our starting off point, our stepping stone for this experience of devotion, which is intelligence and stupidity at the same time. It's up to us, as is said.

Maybe we could have some discussion about that.

VAJRA REGENT: You made it.

QUESTION: [Inaudible]

VR: [Inaudible words] to take the microphone. You said, "Thoughts occur to you"?

Q: Yes, that ran in a slightly different direction—

VR: Than what?

Q: —than what you were talking about. You talked about having doubt about the practice.

VR: Did I?

Q: Yes.

VR: What did I say?

Q: Not doubt about the practice, but—

VR: Oh, no, I didn't say that. What did I say?

Q: Oh, yes, you were talking about blind faith and that you have no assurances and that you have doubt about that what you're doing is right. You know, the whole doubt about that the 2500 year lineage might be a con.

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VR: Yes, right.

Q: But there's also—it works the other way. And that sometimes you feel the lineage is okay, but you're the con, you're the one that's off the mark. And it sort of seems to run both ways. Sometimes it runs one way, and sometimes it runs the other.

VR: It sounds like the same thing.

Q: Yes, it feels a little that way to me. But—

VR: Is it me, or is it them?

Q: What?

VR: Is it me, or is it them?

Q: Oh, I don't know.

VR: Yes.

Q: That leads into my second point—

VR: Which is?

Q: Well, that this doubt kind of keeps kicking you along—

VR: Yes.

Q: —because it's intriguing. You know, you kind of want to dig into it and find out, you know, if there is any reason to doubt, and what's your doubting, and—

VR: Yes.

Q: So it kind of, I don't know, it seems to kind of kick you along.

VR: Quite so, quite so. That's the basic ground of the whole of our experience of our particular lineage and the subject of devotion in general. That without that, nothing's going to kick you along, because you're between the devil and the deep blue sea. Is it me, or is it them. Does he know? Or do I really know? We don't know. That's a good point.

QUESTION: Aren't the refuge vows, the bodhisattva vows, a kind of a list, a kind of a joining?

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VR: Joining?

Q: Well, you were speaking about the lack of a list, the lack of a confirmation, the lack of a place to sign up.

VR: Yes, yes, except that there's no place to sign your name.

Q: But you get a name.

VR: Well, that's something that somebody gives you, not something that you assert. Somebody gave it to you, you didn't ask, particularly. Even so, so what? It's not that taking refuge and bodhisattva vows enables you to become club member, but that the thing in itself is kind of poison, ego poison. I think we're going to talk about that as we go along, especially those two things. But to begin with, we don't even know about that. I mean, that, I mean, a lot of people have already taken such a thing as a bodhisattva vow, refuge vow, and they don't even feel that there's any problem there. So I thought it might be best to talk about some sort of problem first, talk about the ground. But we'll get to that, refuge vow, bodhisattva vow, transcendental Buddhist yearbook. Maybe someday we'll have a name, list of everybody who took the refuge vows. [Laughs] I doubt it.

QUESTION: What prevents doubt itself from becoming just another credential?

VR: I think that doubt itself. It's too uneasy for that. That if it were just a veneer, then it certainly would become another credential. But as we progress along the path, then doubt becomes more monumental and harder to get rid of and push it aside. In the beginning a certain doubt exists, and we would like to push it aside. But it keeps popping up. And I think that irritating factor about the whole thing prevents it from being a credential. In the sense of credential, you would assume that your credentials are "ornaments which are pleasing to wear,"¹ as it says. But in this case that they are [inaudible words] to wear, so that the irritation itself prevents it from being anything that's safe, credential. Do you wear glasses sometime? What happened to your glasses?

¹ Quoting from the "Sadhana of Mahamudra," a meditation liturgy composed by the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche.

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Q: Well, I used to wear glasses.

VR: What happened? Contacts?

Q: Yes, contacts.

VR: It rubs too much, doubt. Doubt rubs too much. Maybe contacts rub too much, but if it were, if it were easy in the beginning to just cover it up with something, like the lineage, for example—Telo, Naro, Marpa, Mila, Gampopa—it would be nice if we could do that. But something keeps coming up which has a sharp edge, and it hurts. So therefore, credentials don't seem to apply because it becomes too irritating to be a credential. Like in other words, your suite and your vest are too tight. You bought the Brook's Brothers tie and suit and the whole thing, and somehow it's choking you. You feel like, you know, he wears it, so-and-so, and he looks okay, doesn't he? But how come I feel so uncomfortable with it? Something like that, I think. Because doubt is intelligent, it has a sharp quality, which cuts any kind of complacency that would come in there. It's an interesting [inaudible: door?] behind you.

QUESTION: You talk about letting go, and yet you talk about holding on to your doubt. And there seems to be some kind of contradiction.

VR: Well, the thing there is that letting go is only because of your doubt, which you can't let go of. You see, holding on to your doubt is beside the point. You'd love to get rid of it and brush it under the table. That's not where letting go comes in. Letting go means holding on. Letting go that you can't get rid of that doubt, no matter how you try, you can't make it into something else, and that's the letting go part. Because of the fact of the matter, which is that you can't get rid of that doubt, then you let go because of that, because you can't get rid of it. You have no choice.

QUESTION: Is there some need not to keep this doubt secret?

VR: Some need not to keep it secret?

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Q: Yes. Is there something of that kind involved, because, as a doubter, I started at two years old, but through my lifetime, often it felt like it had to be kept a secret in various situations.

VR: I think only to oneself, that's where one keeps it secret, I think, where you and I keep it secret, to ourselves.

Q: Oh, yes.

VR: It doesn't matter if you tell somebody else, "I have this terrible doubt. I don't feel secure." It doesn't matter.

Q: It's when you hide it from yourself.

VR: That's it, yes. That you don't acknowledge that it's there.

QUESTION: I'm getting a lot of versions of this doubt. I mean, it's almost a sense of paranoia and a sense of question that comes between you and a situation and gives you a little distance from it. That you really, you know, you step back and you wonder, you think twice is another way to put it, but now in line with what I thought John was getting at was the idea that—

VR: Who is John?

Q: John Patulla, who just asked about keeping a secret. I mean, there's a lot of time when doubt is kind of a social liability, not climbing into a party atmosphere, you know, being a little bit resentful when someone is giving a grandiose speech. Not you in particular [laughter]. This funny quality that it always creates an edge in a situation. It causes not only you to reflect a situation, but it causes you to bounce back. So is that where that attempt to cover it up comes from?

VR: I think so. Yes, doesn't matter about the situation.

Q: But does it actually take on that quality of going out into the world? That's one thing I always wondered about.

VR: Going out into the world?

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Q: That it could actually have—well, I’ve noticed that, for instance, Rinpoche has the most incredible wet blanket effect sometime.

VR: Who?

Q: Rinpoche. He has the effect of a wet blanket or a dead space, that he’ll walk into a room, and immediately everything kind of, this whole pail of doubt, this whole atmosphere of doubt pervades the room, and everything stops, and—is that related?

VR: To what?

Q: To what you are getting at, that doubt is the starting point of devotion?

VR: I think so.

Q: The lineage of doubt could also be another name for it.

VR: Lineage of doubt?

Q: It wouldn’t sell too well, but.

VR: It probably would. Well, I think we have to look at it in terms of starting off point. Rather than “lineage of doubt,” it is here you first touch ground. And everybody spinning around and coming down to earth means, in this case, acknowledging the doubt, rather than that’s the lineage of doubt, but rather, acknowledging doubt is the beginning of the lineage, whether it’s wet or dry doesn’t matter.

Q: Okay, I get it.

VR: Could be dry blanket.

Q: All right.

QUESTION: Just getting a feeling for it, it seems that the doubt is somewhat synonymous with hopelessness.

VR: Yes.

Q: Well, just as you said the same, down to earth, well, you know, somehow...

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VR: Well, you can't do anything about it. You could check off all the little boxes, but still will come out doubt. So, well, if I rationalize in this way that if he does such and such a thing, He—capital H—"Rinpoche says," then that's good for me because... Still, you're faced with the whole discomfort, which we talked about, still discomforting nonetheless, that even if you can rationalize the whole thing properly, that because Tilopa did it, Naropa did it, Marpa did it, Mila did it, Gampopa did it, then I could do it as well. I should do it as well. Still, it has slightly strange cutting effect. Still hurts.

QUESTION: What's the nature of practice when you begin to get the feeling like you can't really imitate the teachings?

VR: Well, then practice becomes very wide open.

Q: Seems so.

VR: But it is practice, nonetheless. It's beginning to feel wide open space. But it has still, has some boundary, because you still asked the question.

Q: It seems that's lots of boundary, actually.

VR: Well, tell me another one. [Laughter]

QUESTION: So doubt, then, is ignorance?

VR: Ignorance and intelligence at the same time.

Q: Would you say it's synonymous with ignorance?

VR: Synonymous? No, I wouldn't say that.

QUESTION: Could you explain a little bit about what generates the doubt or what makes it come out?

VR: Yes. Quite simply, "this" and "that," something great over there, something lesser over here.

Q: Great?

VR: Well, as well as, "Can I get that? Can something be transplanted in me? Is it actually possible that I could have a successful transplant? Could something outside of myself be put into myself?"

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Q: So that's where the teacher comes in, in this question.

VR: That's right.

Q: We've got the doubt as basic ground, but the teacher comes in to keep playing with that "me-them" stuff.

VR: Well, I think the teacher generates the whole thing. I mean, even in terms of the historical Buddha. That even if one reads the history of the Buddha, that is outside. That book itself, "The Life and Times of Shakyamuni," becomes outside. So the question immediately arises, "Can I do that?"

Q: Thank you.

QUESTION: I was wondering about the relationship between this doubt and what seems to be just a natural curiosity to see how things work.

VR: Well?

Q: It seems like we do have, you know —

VR: Natural curiosity.

Q: Well, I call it that, I guess. But a clock ticks, and we take it apart, and [inaudible]...

VR: That's a good point, actually. Yes. I think that the two things go together very well. That you are drawn toward a flame because it's light and it's bright and it heats. But the question is, "Do you feel cold, or do you need light?"

Q: And then maybe you think, "Maybe I can do that, maybe I can produce that heat."

VR: That comes later on, yes, sure. First, you see it, that's all. Whether or not you need warmth or you need light is questionable. And the fact that you think, "Can I produce that? Can I do that?" is what we call spiritual materialism. But the initial impulse that you're talking about is more on the path of devotion. That you see something bright, you go toward it. Simple as that.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, friends of Karme-Chöling, and friends of friends, I think that we're going to close our talk tonight and discussion of devotion. And

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I would like to say that I feel that it is necessary for everybody here to participate fully in the I.T.S. and take part in the sitting practice, and study and discussion groups, whatnot, because we are trying to create and talk about some sort of atmosphere and feeling which we all partake in at once, simultaneously, which involves a mutual language. And I think that what's been set up already is that mutual language we're talking about. Whether or not we believe in it or not, well, we don't know. And whether or not it's going to work in terms of how we speak to each other and relate with each other, we still don't know. But on the other hand, I would still ask you all to not pull any rank here this weekend, five days that we have together, because certain people are considered to be "great Dharmadhatu people" and accomplished people who have studied a lot and should know all about this devotion stuff. On the other hand, I feel that if we don't partake completely together in this thing, then maybe your great knowledge won't come out, and you won't be able to give in to your doubt as much as you would like to do. So in that case, I would like to encourage everybody to sit a lot, according to the schedule, and take part in discussion groups and whatnot that we have here designed. And also I would like to thank everybody for coming here on this historic occasion [laughter]. And I feel extremely, extremely grateful to be back home again. Thank you.

[END OF RECORDING]

TALK TWO OF FIVE

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Yesterday we talked about doubt and a kind of intelligence which is part of experience, experiencing doubt. Today I would like to extend that further in discussing the path of devotion in relationship to surrendering.

In the Kagyü lineage, teaching situations are brought about by intense devotion to the guru, or teacher. That intense devotion is aimed at uniting one's whole being with that of the guru, which means recognizing the guru principle in your ordinary life situation, everyday situation. And that is a difficult process, not an easy one. If it were an easy one or comfortable one, then it would simply be a continuation of glorifying one's own ego. What's involved in uniting one's being with that of the guru is the experience of complete humiliation and embarrassment of ego's [inaudible words] comfort. If not, it would simply be some sort of reinforcement of ego's territory and glorification of ego's territory.

In terms of searching [for] and finding the teacher, all kinds of expectations are involved. As we said yesterday that there seems to be something precious that one would like to get, highly valued prize that the teacher possesses. We would like to get that. And we brought up the attitude of spiritual materialism. In terms of searching for the guru and surrendering to the guru, that certain particular pitfalls apply, and we should be aware of those.

A student who is motivated by spiritual materialism is interested in advancing his own reputation. To him, meeting the guru is a feather in his own cap, so to speak, his or her own cap. It could take the form of social advancement, increasing one's social standing, that "I know so-and-so," "I met so-and-so," "have studied with so-and-so," "fell at the feet of so-and-so." Or could be material, of taking the guru's word and producing your own economic

wonder from that, even to the point of imagining how it would be once you possess what the guru has, how you would manifest with your own particular great dignity and robes and whatnot. And in this sense we're talking about something quite different, how you would manifest in your three-piece suit, whatever.

What's involved in this searching for the guru is expectation and fascination, and that to begin with, those things must be given up. We have all kinds of expectations of how the teacher should be, but basically, on the path of devotion, what we are talking about is a wearing out process, a process which actually wears out entertainment and expectation and any kind of glorification of ego whatsoever. And that kind of wearing out is only possible when we can surrender.

Surrendering means that we have to present our entire neurotic baggage to the teacher. And the possibilities there are shocking, painful and embarrassing, humiliating and monotonous. And this wearing out process can only occur when we realize that surrendering has nothing to do with defending ourselves or improving ourselves at all. Defending ourselves and improving ourselves in relationship to the guru takes all kinds of little clever tricks on our part. That we feel there is something precious that we would like to get so that we have to perform little tricks to seduce the teacher, such as a kind of showing that we are willing to surrender, and we would undergo any hardship that guru puts on us to show how open we are, how willing we are to surrender. At the same time, we are imagining how great it's going to be once he gives us that pearl, we can display it to everyone else.

There is a necessity here, to begin with, of offering one's self-hatred to the teacher, which is an extremely difficult process, because our self-hatred has become our own occupation. We have managed to figure out how to evaluate ourselves constantly in terms of criticism and praise. And the prospect of presenting our own neurosis as it is is a quite disturbing one. It's a frightening one. We would like to present something better than that. We would like to

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present how we would be as perfect students. And that's the attitude of spiritual materialism.

Our own self-hatred has occupied us in terms of evaluation and self-criticism for a very long time, so much so that we can't imagine how we could exist without such evaluation. But the teacher is not interested in that at all. In fact, he's not fooled by any particular tricks that we would like to manifest on how great we are, how open we are, how surrendering we are.

We would like to get something first, before we have to give anything. The attitude of spiritual materialism is trying to extract something from the teacher that you have to go in and pull it out. You have to get it. You have to do the work to get it, pull it out, extract it from the teacher. In the real experience of surrendering there is just purely the presentation of one's neurotic state of mind as it is, without trying to doctor it up and without trying to improve or dilute it in any way. There is no way that one can prepare the ground properly so that you can avoid embarrassment or humiliation. What happens simply is that you have an expectation from your teacher, and that expectation seems to crumble when you're faced with the real situation of meeting the teacher. Your fascination, your hope and your dream doesn't meet up properly, doesn't work out, and you are faced with simply what is. And that's the working basis of surrendering, working with disappointment. All your hopes and dreams have dashed completely, pulverized into dust.

Well, there are all kinds of ways of covering that up as well. That we say, "That's purely the guru's play." Even though he did those disgusting, revolting things to me, still it all fits in perfectly well. I was right all the time. That's just what I expected." That's very near and dear to all of us. If we are going to walk this path and tread the path of devotion, then we begin to realize that our disappointment is a key factor in our practice, and that not only do we have to accept it, but we have to work with it and make it part of our lives completely, one hundred percent. Because that is the situation when you can be with what is, exactly as it is, when all of your expectations crumble into dust and there's nothing there but the actual situation. And that's the reality of the path of

devotion, that all our little games and trying to seduce and to show the teacher how wonderful we are just meets with a blank wall, nothing, and we are faced with our disappointment.

Well, we could say that's all just a kind of naïve point of view, and stupid people would do that. It's a very gross level, it's not spiritual at all, and surrendering should be a glorious event with lotus petals streaming down, and the guru should be so excited to see us surrendering there, heavenly music and whatnot. But it doesn't turn out to be that way. It turns out that you are face to face with your preconceptions, and they don't apply. Of course, we could say that we are very intelligent people, and that we can adjust that properly. But that doesn't get away from the actual pain that you feel when you are faced with that complete letdown. You thought something else was going to happen entirely, and it didn't happen that way. So surrendering is embracing our whole collection of neurotic qualities, states of mind, and presenting that to the teacher. It's a terrible, disgusting thing, completely embarrassing thing. It's naked, exposing. Your so-called needs are irrelevant. What you would like to get out of it is also irrelevant. Just simply what you present.

To understand that is to understand that that is the path that has been taken by the lineage holders of the Kagyü tradition. They understood how it was that we worked with our pain, that we didn't try to get rid of it, particularly, but that we offered it in a gesture of surrender, the whole mess. We did not try to present how perfect we were, how wonderful we were, to the teacher, and how worthy we were to receive the teaching, but we realized that there was only one course to take, and that is to present what is. Our entire bag, so to speak.

In doing so, the inspiration of renunciation begins to take place, realizing that working with the neurosis and pain is in itself the inspiration to renounce, to give up. You can say those two are the same thing. Renunciation is a heavy word because we read a lot of books, but simply it means giving up fascination and entertainment and being willing to commit oneself to a path of practice and dedication. And that kind of commitment is a very intense and personal one. That once you begin to see that the path of devotion is completely one of opening

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to the situation, opening to the realities of your own pain, then you begin to look at the people in the lineage, the lineage holders who did so, and how they did so, looking at their example. And each one of them did so in a different way, but in the end, had to do exactly the same thing, which was to give up the whole thing, give in completely, whether they were a scholar or aristocrat or beggar or family person or a rich person. In the end, the whole thing has to be presented as a beginning offering of our feast.

To have a feast, we have to first realize if there is adequate space to have such a feast, and that is our appreciation of doubt. Then we have to go further and see if we have the facilities—tablecloths, napkins and whatnot—and that is our offering of neurotic mind, potentialities of our neurosis, completely. So we begin our appreciation of ground and environment for our feast, feast of devotion.

And in working with the inspiration of the Kagyü lineage, that experience of devotion is not simply a tantric experience, but works on a three-yana principle, the first being the experience of the discovery of pain in our lives, which, here, the relationship with the guru, as throughout, is catalyst, spark, in our own awareness, of discomfort and pain in the hinayana level. And confidence, friendship in the mahayana level. And subtleties of experience, which is the tantric level.

But before we can begin eating or even cooking our sumptuous meal, we have to realize the requirements for such a feast, and whether we are willing to take such a step as exposing ourselves in an expression of nakedness, and giving up the hope that by doing such a thing, we are going to achieve perfection and glory.

Maybe we could have some discussion on that.

QUESTION: Could you speak somewhat on how the surrendering might manifest itself? It seems it could very easily try to figure out what this surrendering is about, and like, to present yourself as you are, you might have many layers, but than that's not, but that's not what you are in your neurotic state, but that's not what you are presenting. If my understanding is right, there

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is something more than that, less layers. But then that seems to be a bit heavy. I can relate to what you're saying, but then when I think, "Well, okay, so now what ..." I mean, for one who hasn't surrendered much, it's difficult to know how to do it.

VAJRA REGENT: Well, you just have to be very up front and present whatever there is, forget about the layers, whatever comes up.

Q: That could be interpreted as some kind of confessional or something –

VR: Well, up to you. You want to confess, go ahead.

Q: And if you don't want to confess?

VR: Then don't do it. It's a matter of how much you are willing to be embarrassed by the spontaneous disclosure of what's on your mind.

Q: You could really trip out on that, too –

VR: If you have the time, I suppose you could.

Q: – and just lay it all out and really get into it.

VR: Well, go ahead then.

Q: You want me to lay it out?

VR: No, not now [laughter]. I mean, that's it, though, that's fine. I mean, go ahead, don't hesitate about that. The teacher doesn't have blinders, can figure it out anyway.

QUESTION: Somewhere in Feast of Devotion² it said somewhere that the student is not to present himself in a great manner, making believe he is something better than what he is, at the same time not to downgrade himself either, present himself as some kind of piece of shit. And, you know, in trying to get some feeling for surrendering, it seems that you could do that very easily, really getting into how rotten you are, and then that's not quite it either. You don't worry about that?

VR: I don't think there's any possible way you could prepare it properly.

² Referring to a seminar sourcebook.

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Q: So just do it.

VR: That's it.

Q: Okay.

VR: You come for your interview with the teacher, and you thought about a whole lot of things you want to say, and you almost prepared your entrance, how you would walk in, how you would sit down, how you would present the whole thing, and suddenly, something doesn't quite click, and you're sitting there, empty. And you say, "Well, I had a whole lot to say, but I can't seem to think of anything to say." That's it, whatever comes up. That you have the willingness to do that, embarrassing as it might be. It might be terribly embarrassing, especially if you have some sort of mind which is a very logical one, and you feel that, "I've got exactly these points, A, B, C and D, which I want to make with the teacher." And you go in, and the whole thing goes out the window. Or the other way around, you have nothing to say, and you walk in, and suddenly, you have A, B, C and D, and you're embarrassed about that. Whole thing is just completely natural, whatever it is, as neurotic or as messed up as it is. That's the beginning of the feast. And presenting the raw material. Otherwise, how are we doing to cook it? We can't cook it properly unless we have it right there.

QUESTION: Although the situation is just doing sitting practice, or relating with people in the sangha, whether it's in Boulder or here, the idea seems to be to cool out as much as possible —

VR: Whose idea is that?

Q: Well, that's the idea I get. I'm not saying that's the teaching, but most of the time I try to do as little as possible, in a sense, [laughter] you know, being neurotic, it's a bad thing being neurotic.

VR: It's very bad, extremely bad, terrible.

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Q: You walk first one foot, then the other foot, and then you try to sit, and if you feel like shouting or kicking, you don't do that. That seems to be a basic problem with me.

VR: Problem. How do you express that neurosis?

Q: Yes. Or what is the neurosis you're asking us to express?

VR: Well, the unprepared one. [Laughter] See you soon. [Laughter]

QUESTION: It seems like one thing that happens is that you feel a lot of resentment toward the teacher and toward the situation, and at the same time a lot of warmth. And you feel sort of stuck in the middle between which is which, and it's sort of difficult to express the one, and the other is sort of there too, you feel very lopsided.

VR: You a member here, living here?

Q: Yes.

VR: How long?

Q: Three months. I'm not here now, I was here last fall.

VR: So what is it? You feel resentment and warmth?

Q: Well, sort of. It seems like when you're there, and you want to sort of express it, and leave, you feel you haven't expressed it at all. It's very frustrating, you won't even see him for another year —

VR: The whole thing involved there is what we talked about earlier — disappointment, that crystalline form. Disappointment pushes you right into what is, and you can't escape that, not at all. That's hundred percent what is — disappointment. You would like to come in and say all that's on your mind and pour out your whole thing, or on the other hand, you would like to come in and be very cautious and say only the right things. And you hope that the listener will go along with you. It doesn't happen that way, usually. And as you walk out, the whole thing falls down. And that's it. It stops there. That's the whole

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thing in a nutshell, that you begin to experience devotion on that level, and begin to feel that you can drop off a cliff, because you just did. [Laughter]

Q: You're already at the bottom.

VR: Yes. What happens is that you suddenly think, "I didn't do that. I didn't drop, did I?" then you go back and regroup the whole thing again for the next time, and again—pushed off. Just acknowledging that disappointment is important, to begin with. Acknowledging that the whole thing didn't work out as you wanted it to. In fact, it was very disappointing. You know, it could either be shocking or boring or exciting, which is what you didn't want anyway. And as you walk out the door, you are stuck with a complete caricature of yourself, all glaring lights, and everybody's watching your every move. One shouldn't miss that. That's important. That's your feast offering. See, if you do that, if you can connect with that, if you can be aware of that whole humiliation, embarrassment, whatever, then suddenly you begin to feel that it's okay, I can present that because he or she, whoever the teacher is, didn't mind. I minded. I tried to make something else out of that. That's the point.

QUESTION: Does through—the hinayana, mahayana, vajrayana seem to involve the acknowledgment of that humiliation to accepting the, you know, you were saying that it's okay, the humiliation, to becoming friends with the humiliation?

VR: Well, we're going to talk about that as we go along. First of all, acknowledging it, you might say is hinayana. Making friends with it is mahayana. And actually playing with it, working with it is vajrayana. First, you have to say, "It's there. I'm embarrassed."

Q: Is it playing with it in terms of the energy?

VR: Well, energy is a big, long word. May have to take a look and see. First, you have to say, "It's there. I'm embarrassed. I feel completely naked." That's the first part. When you can do that, then we can talk about whether or not you can make friends with that nakedness or not.

QUESTION: Last night you talked about doubt being the gateway to giving in, and tonight the way you presented your talk, it's much more in terms of offering

up something, much more active kind of thing you do. Could you draw those two approaches together?

VR: Yes. Well, the first is quite conceptual. In terms of doubt, what we're talking about is one's conceptualizations of a perfect world, how it would be if I were on a cloud somewhere in one of those thangkas. But then you wonder if that's possible. Is that actually possible? Then you get closer in. you start walking even closer, and then you suddenly get the message that if you would like to be there, then you would have to do the next thing, which is present what you are. It's a progression. To begin with, you see an ideal, and you would like to possess that ideal, but you have first of all doubt that that ideal even exists or doesn't exist. So at some point you surrender to that, "It's okay, I don't know. I don't know. That whole thing could be just a painting in green, red, blue, gold – it doesn't matter." You know, "But I'm just going to drop it anyway. And drop myself in on this Karme-Chöling madhouse. A group of people sitting around and, you know, it's not even finished." Then when you get in, you plop yourself in, then someone says, "Well, that's just ordinary sort of thing. Sure, you plopped yourself in. But now you have to present yourself, once you're in." You have to present your card, your whole collection of qualities of what you are. Otherwise, you can't get further in it. You'd like to get into everybody's kind, and be friends with everybody, but they won't let you be friends unless you present yourself.

Q: So I see what's constantly happening here is the doubt as well as the longing. I sort of forgot about the longing.

VR: Well, the longing begins at the beginning, that you saw something that you'd like to possess. That's longing. You saw something bright out there. Something sterling. Beautiful. You'd like to have it. Which propels you even to doubt that it existed to begin with. And then you get further on, and you get in there, and someone said, "Wipe the toilet. Clean the floor." And then you're wondering, "Wait a minute. Is that beautiful thing still there, or am I sunk into mud, materiality, junk?" Somebody like me comes along and says, "Well, do it anyway. That's part of walking toward." Still, longing is there. We don't even know what, longing for what. Just something bright. But unless you progress in

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that way, surrender your doubt, then beyond surrendering your doubt, surrender your emotions and emotional turmoil, whole presentation of yourself, whatever it is. There's nowhere to go.

Peter, you want to say something?

QUESTION: Yes. It seems that you present yourself whether you want to or not, anyhow. If you're around people long enough. You know there's something, you're trying to play it cool, you're trying to take the punches as it comes. You're going to be together about accepting jobs you don't quite like, and you put up a good front, but something happens one day, and you just get pissed off, and you shout and you have a temper tantrum, you know what I mean. It seems that if you're with a group of people, you're just going to present yourself, no matter what.

VR: Yes. So what about that? Why is this group of people better than the other groups?

Q: Is it? It's true with any groups. If you're around them long enough.

VR: No, not necessarily. In some groups, it might be a wonderful thing if you did the right thing, and in some groups, it might be a wonderful thing if you did the wrong thing. But here it doesn't matter either way. Somebody is going to be pissed off, no matter what. [Laughter] That's it. Space. Openness. Present yourself as you are, some will like it, some won't like it. I remember my first job here—1971?—credentials. I was cleaning the toilet on the second floor. I thought it was an absolutely horrible job, and then I got reprimanded because I didn't clean the back. Humiliated. Terrible. Anyway, personal case history. Did you do it?

QUESTION: Beginning your talk, you mentioned just briefly the guru principle. Does that have anything to do with continually catching yourself trying to con yourself and others?

VR: Yes. In the beginning it does. Yes. That the great con job exists from the beginning. That we would like to know, we would hope that it's possible, to con the whole thing. But the guru principle is the cutting edge, makes it impossible to

con, because the guru principle is not that there's a kind of transparent figure lurking about saying, "Don't do this. Don't do that." But that your actions become quite hollow. They don't make any sense, and you look around, and it's almost like an echo coming back at you in a room. That you said something, and someone said, "What? Who said that?" That's the guru principle. At least in the beginning.

Q: At some point you begin to be thankful that that's actually happening, that something is actually happening.

VR: Yes, at the same point you begin to use it as feast, rather than you are frightened.

QUESTION: We're talking as if there's some kind of move we can make toward surrender. But is there really anything beside practicing, is that—

VR: Understanding of practice is twofold: not only sitting practice, which you provide yourself with a space in which nothing happens. That you have the colossal nerve and stupidity to sit on a cushion for an hour, or six hours, or ten hours a day, which is an affront to your ego to begin with. But also in relation to your teacher, that you also present to the teacher what there is of you. That is a move, particularly, it is somewhat of a move. You can't prepare it, you can't strategize it, and that's the move in itself, that you can't do that. Sitting practice only intensifies that. Eventually, you're going to look around and say, "Is there someone here I can say some thing to?" If you sit for a long time, at Karme-Chöling, at a dathün, at an I.T.S. situation, that you become quite antsy about the whole thing. It starts to bubble up, and you would like to talk to somebody. But you are pretty much embarrassed about some kind of therapy, you don't want to do that. You don't want to make a confession, particularly. But something, some object, some valued situation somewhere, you gravitate toward, and the point is that in doing that, there is as much strategy as, let's say, in sitting practice. As much as you try to strategize sitting practice, it doesn't work out. You would like to be straight with your breath, the whole time. Something happens, try to be straight again. Same thing with the teacher. You go to the teacher, you would like to be straight, something happens.

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Q: I guess that would apply as well to the idea of meditation in action.

VR: I think so. In this case, what we're talking about to begin with, is seeing the teacher is meditation in action. We're talking about preparing the ground, which is your doubt, and then we're talking about fertilizing your ground, which is the presentation of your neurosis. And in that case, we're not talking about meditation in action as some kind of superman who goes around doing meditative things, but it's simply what he or she does is to present her berserk quality to the teacher, whatever it is, it may not be berserk, but just pulling out one's hair. It may just be very shy. Same thing. Same thing. That's meditation in action in this point in our devotion seminar, of presenting to the teacher one's own quality, whatever it is. That's what we call meditation in action.

QUESTION: You mentioned an interview with the teacher, or presenting to the teacher, speaking as one from the boondocks.

VR: Boondocks, yes.

Q: Is this presentation or contact with the teacher required often, or constant contact?

VR: I think it depends on the individual involved.

Q: Yes.

VR: Yes. That some people would like to bring a roll of toilet paper whenever they go in [laughter], but if you're only understanding the path properly, then you might have an interview with the teacher every six months, every two years, doesn't matter. If you're willing to present yourself. If you're willing to do that.

QUESTION: We're talking about interviews, opening to the teacher. Why?

VR: Why what?

Q: Why open to the teacher.

VR: Because you value something.

Q: Well, then, if there's nothing there that we want.

VR: Well, then you go home.

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Q: Well, then there's no point to the teacher then.

VR: Absolutely none.

Q: Then it's just a game.

VR: What game?

Q: To see the teacher.

VR: See the teacher?

Q: Have an interview with Rinpoche.

VR: If you value something, then it's not a game. Then it's a deadly game.

Q: But to value something, there is—

VR: Spiritual materialism.

Q: Excuse me?

VR: Spiritual materialism. Is that what you were going to say?

Q: No, but that's a good phrase.

VR: That's the point. You can't help it. You know it's completely bullshit. Go see someone to give me something, how is that possible? Somebody can give me something. And here you have to do it anyway.

Q: Well, then there's nothing there to be gotten.

VR: Well, we'll see about that. We don't know. We believe nothing there to be gotten, and yet at the same time we hope there is something there to be gotten. Can you be one hundred percent sure that there's nothing there?

Q: I don't think I want to be one hundred percent sure.

VR: Well, we don't. So therefore we have to go. That's the only way we can get in touch with the disappointment.

Q: It's ridiculous.

VR: Absolutely. Absurd. But very organic.

Q: So is taking a shit.

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VR: Yes, like compost. Yes. It's hard to believe that we could put our shit on the plants and they would grow. Not our own shit, but whatever shit there is. We'd like to put it on a plant and make them grow. Sounds absurd. That we could put garbage on top of seed, and seed will grow. How can that be possible? Sounds contradictory. But that's the only way. You have to put the garbage down first.

Q: But we could put that garbage on our own seeds. I mean, we don't have to go to Rinpoche to do that.

VR: What own seeds? Who's got their own seeds? Come on.

Q: Whose seeds do I have if I don't have my own?

VR: You just have seeds. They're not your own or his own, particularly. There's no patron here, no great farmer in the sky. There's just seeds and manure. You don't own it, he doesn't own it. What are you going to say? Did that make any sense?

Q: Well, it sort of belies the circumstances.

VR: In what sense?

Q: There does seem to be a patron here.

VR: Well, I mean, that's up to you. Check it out for yourself. Maybe it's pure myth. You can't find out by waiting in the wings, particularly, and making judgment from afar. That's the whole point in surrender — there is no evaluation process.

QUESTION: I feel confused right now. It seems like a central issue to the path, surrender. At the same time I don't understand how it's anything more than just sort of walking out and saying, "God, I made an ass out of myself. I'm going back to my pillow," and sitting right down again.

VR: That's where the teacher comes in. Because I made an ass out of myself to that person. You can't just say it to space. That somebody was there and heard you. That's what makes it doubly embarrassing, really embarrassing. Now even whether you believe that the person sitting there is a big brain, a gigantic 2001 [film] character that can understand everything you have to say doesn't matter.

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It's just that you told somebody. Which is not the same thing as confession, but the fact that you had the guts, without a screen, to say to somebody, "Listen, you know, I don't know who you are sitting in that chair, but I don't care who you are. But I feel I'm as good as you are." And the teacher says, 'Yes?' Still, you walk out with kind of – because you did that. Not because anybody's in a patron situation and value-judgment situation. It's just that you at once had the guts to present whatever there was at that point. Without wondering when lightning is going to come in the window. Of course, as you walk out, you may think that there's lightning coming in at the window, you know, and that you made a big mistake. "I made a big mistake." That doesn't matter. It's too late. You already did it. You know. It's because the whole point of devotion is that there's somebody there, the object of devotion, even at whatever level that you look at it—as the great friend, or, as we're going to go along in our talks here, as an elder, or spiritual friend, or guru, authoritarian person. Doesn't matter which level. But you approach, and you spill the beans. And then you walk out, and you're embarrassed because someone heard them. That's it.

Q: Part of that process allows you to be more vulnerable with other people, because you make an ass out of yourself.

VR: Sure. You can't forget it. You can't forget it, you know. You walk out and somebody says, "How was it?" [Laughter]

QUESTION: What's the distinction between making an ass [of yourself] to your teacher, or making an ass [of yourself] to your boss, or to your children, whatever?

VR: Well, I think it's the amount of devotion. That some things you prize very highly. In some situations you prize your boss because he has tremendous knowledge and clarity, and you relate it to your situation of your job, which is lesser quality and clarity. In terms of your family situation, you might relate it to your father, who you felt dealt better with his children, like yourself, than you deal with yours. But in terms of spirituality, it's more difficult, because you can't quite get the quality. You think it's greater, bigger, more fantastic than those ordinary things. So then you develop some kind of awe.

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Q: Sounds impoverished.

VR: Well, I suppose there's something beyond.

Q: What?

VR: Beyond. Beyond.

Q: Beyond the impoverishment?

VR: Yes. That somebody, the teacher in this case, isn't impoverished, and everybody else is. So you'd like to have that. So would we all. So we think, anyway. Is that what we're talking about?

Q: More or less.

VR: Well, we go along. That's a nice idea of an I.T.S., is that we can keep hammering, if I can use that analogy here, our understanding, keep batting at it until it feels like it's secure, and then, of course, the whole thing might fall down, but we don't know. Still, we keep hammering away.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, friends, fellow students, fellow practitioners and friends of friends, mothers of friends, fathers of friends, brothers of friends and whatnot. That could include the whole group. The whatnots, anyway. Tomorrow we have our nyinthun situation, and I think that the reason that we have been able to communicate properly so far as that there's some kind of basis, ground of, to our communication, which is the meditative state of mind. Which is the open state of mind, and doesn't have any particular construct whatsoever. It's just there. Sitting there with the passion, aggression, and ignorance all along. And not doing anything about that. Just sitting there with that. And that's the reason why we can talk together. That's the reason why we can question each other and discuss back and forth, because it's not that the speaker has particular knowledge, that valued knowledge, and that the questioner is stupid and underbaked person. But that the interplay between the two is the ground on which we communicate, and that's because we have the guts to let ourselves sit on a yellow and gold cushion, like idiots in a room, and do nothing. That's because we do

that. That's the logic of our whole experience, which is illogic. That because we have nothing to do, therefore we have something comes up, and we have some ground. Because the speaker has also nothing to do, and people in the audience also have nothing to do. Because here we are. Come to Karne-Chöling for an Intensive Training Seminar on Feast of Devotion, which doesn't make any sense. Because we don't know who the speaker is, and the speaker doesn't know who you are. From the beginning there's no predetermined situation at all. Nothing. We don't have any one, two, three, four. We just say, "I know so-and-so from New York City." From Boston, from Burlington, from where? Who cares? I don't know, but we do have one thing in common, is that we sit together, and we sit wherever we are.

I happen to sit on the other side of the mountain. Which is sitting by myself in a very puffed up situation. Which you might think it's a very luxurious situation for me, but on the other hand, it's very lonely for me. I have to not sit with all of you here, I sit by myself. Which is worse than you. On the other hand, I'm not going to put on my sneakers and run over the hill and say, "Well, let me in, you know, I want to sit with you." It just so happens this way that I'm sitting here and you're sitting here. There's no big cosmic thing anywhere. Of course, you may not be sure of that. But I am. I guess that's why I'm sitting here.

[Laughter]

In any case, I encourage you, each and every one of you, no matter what your rank and situation is, in this organization of Karne-Chöling, which is the absolute, true seat of Kagyü devotion in this country, which I can say without a doubt, because my boss tells me so. And if you think I'm conning you, tough luck. That, I really mean if, if you sit together and we talk together, then we have mutual ground of understanding, and then we can bring up these topics, which are very near and dear to our hearts, which is what we're here for. Otherwise, we might as well join any old group. You might join the Salvation Army. Which this is not, hardly. Has anybody here been saved? Never heard of Karne-Chöling being saved. In fact, when they leave, they think, "Whew! I got out in time. Before I was saved."

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Well, anyway, as we go on, tomorrow is our nyinthun situation, and we have a lecture in the evening, I believe at the same time. And we'll talk about the three-yana approach to the guru. But I again suggest that you devote your time wholeheartedly to sitting practice, which is the basis of our lineage and the basis of our thought and the basis of our communication together. Thank you very much. Good night.

[END OF RECORDING]

TALK THREE OF FIVE

SEPTEMBER 05, 1976

We should continue our discussion of devotion in terms of the inspiration of renunciation in the three yanas and the relationship between the student and the teacher in the three-yana approach. In the hinayana, the inspiration for devotion comes from a basic sense of poverty, that we are intensely hungry, extremely hungry. And that hunger has no room for credentials particularly, as we discussed. We can't spend time at this point looking to see if the menu has all the correct spelling and if we are pleased by the design of the menu. We're too hungry for that. And our hunger has a kind of desperation to it. We become desperate people. There's no use of hearing stories of how wonderful this meal is going to taste once we get it. It doesn't make any sense to us to imagine the beautiful smells and aroma, and the beautiful plates that meal of wisdom is served on. That won't suffice – we want to get to it. We'd like to eat it.

In the hinayana experience of devotion, there's a feeling of being trapped, feeling of being psychologically feeble, even stupid. Basically trapped, and there's no inspiration whatsoever. But that absence of inspiration is the intelligence in the situation. And because we have no choice, that we're so hungry that we can't waste too much time, and we seek out the teacher and the teachings. The experience of pain that has become so acute in our lives is unbearable at this point. So much so that relief, any kind of relief in terms of our experience, only intensifies the pain, because the relief seems to be so short, closes up so fast that the pain becomes more intense. We had hoped that it would last longer. We had hoped that whatever we experienced, particular little pleasures that we've been attached to would last a little bit longer. But it doesn't. And that becomes more intense. Even the dream of wisdom, dream of enlightenment, the dream that we would like to break through this thing and barrier and achieve some sort of great state, that's equally painful, because how

could we possibly handle that. It seems entirely out of our reach. So that increases the pain.

The teacher at this point is in total contrast to ourselves. The teacher's sanity is so contrary to ours, to our own confusion. So the approach to devotion in the hinayana begins with that sense of poverty or inadequacy, feeling starved, so much so that the pain in our stomach to want to eat something drives us, pushes us, into the feeling of devotion. And that devotion at the beginning has to be, must be a simple minded one. It can't be complicated in any way. It must be very immediate and direct. And that directness involves the teacher. The fact that a teacher is a human being is very comforting to us. He or she is subject to the same kind of karmic consequences as we ourselves. They have a body, have to eat, have to sleep, have to go to the bathroom, are subject to sickness, and have to take aspirin or pain killers, or whatnot. And that's very comforting. There's a human being there.

That human quality is our connection in the beginning experience of devotion. That there's a human being on the other side which we can connect with ordinary life situation. There is someone who is very ordinary like ourselves, has a body, has to do the whole thing, has to be born and die. So we can connect on that ordinary life situation. That's our inspiration to communicate with such a person. If that person were sitting on clouds with glorious robes and light shining all over the place, impossible. We are too wretched for that. Our feeling of being trapped and being stupid and completely confused, how can we relate to something that is so high up, glorious, fantastic? We have to relate with something much more human, human being. So you might say that the experience of devotion in the hinayana is a kind of hierarchical situation. That you have tremendous respect and awe for the teacher simply because here is a person who has dedicated himself or herself one hundred percent to the spiritual practice. And from our point of view that is fantastic achievement, somebody could do such a thing. In the midst of all that chaos they could demonstrate one hundred percent commitment twenty-four hours a day. So admiration and inspiration grows out of that, that such a person exists in the human form.

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In traditional examples in India and Ceylon that the layman, so to speak, ourselves, would support the monks and the nuns because they had such respect that someone could put in twenty-four hours a day practice. Traditional examples are that the layman would invite the monks and nuns for lavish feast, prepare a feast, twelve, sixteen courses, and after the feast was over, they would ask the head of the party, the head monk, or who ever was in charge of the party, to give a discourse on the dharma. And that they felt extremely grateful for that, that they could support such people, who have dedicated their life one hundred percent to the dharma. And in this case there wasn't a sense of being ripped off.

And I think that we could look at that in our own situation here at Karme Chöling, if I might say. That [laughs] somebody gives a speech wanting so much money to finish the building and create a situation for the dharma. It's not so much that somebody else is going to get the reward here, that I'm going to give my support to these people so that they can reach nirvana, and I'll just be trailing behind like a little dog, eventually I might make it, eventually I might do it. But it's not quite that. It's that because such people have put their one hundred percent energy into working for everybody, into dedicating themselves to the teachings of Buddhism, that other people will be benefited by that. So in the hinayana approach that there are people worthy of such respect because they haven't thought about themselves, particularly. They just put their twenty-four hour effort into teaching and into practicing.

Well, getting back to our own mess – pain at this point is unbearable pain. No stories, no visions, no imaginations, nothing is going to fix it, absolutely nothing. We played out our options, so to speak. We come to the end of our psychological rope. There's no way we can imagine some greater glory. And like I said, even if we imagined that we can't figure out how we going to handle it. The question is here that entertainment doesn't apply anymore. We have tried all our avenues of entertainment. Entertained ourselves by every little device that we can think of, and still the situation is desperate. Necessity is for some kind of immediate action. We're taken into the emergency room at this point, wheeled in, there's no room for picking and choosing who's going to be my doctor in the

emergency room, you are out cold. You're being wheeled in. Anything that will help satisfy the intense pain we are going through, anything. So we're not in the market for shopping around for what's the best, what's the most decorative, most experienced, most pleasing, it doesn't make any difference anymore. It's what can help. This point the only thing that can help is an emergency room treatment. And that is the experience of beginning devotion, of pushing oneself into the situation with the teacher.

What we have to do is come down to earth. Our dreams have become completely confused, and we have no idea how to handle those dreams, and we have to come down to earth. And the teacher is the inspiration in hinayana devotion. Because he seems to handle his world quite well. He handles ordinary situations extraordinarily, he knows how to pick up his cup and handle his suit and tie and handle social situations. He's not embarrassed or freaked out by who comes up and asks for a light or cigarette. He's not embarrassed by the space when there is nothing to say. He knows how to work with ordinary situations, and he does it so well that we have tremendous feeling of awe and feeling of respect. That situation inspires us because we feel so wretched in some way, so psychologically poor that we have to take some steps to begin a process of relating with sanity – and these steps to begin with are taking refuge.

Taking refuge in this case is taking refuge in the Buddha as example. Buddha as example means that someone like ourselves met with the fact that there are no alternatives whatsoever. That we have no alternatives, we are faced with the open heart surgery, immediately. And such a person as Buddha himself was faced with the same exact situation. That there was no entertainment whatsoever, no exotic approach, no fantastic dream, no memory, no story, nothing is going to protect us. Nothing is going to save us. Just immediate surgery on ourselves.

So we take refuge in the Buddha as declaration of the fact that we are in the same boat he was. That's the meaning, that's what is meant by taking refuge – that you're in the same boat. It doesn't mean that there's a great protector of a Buddha, a whole a celestial being able to pick you up. It means that you have a

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similarity of experience as simple as that. Taking refuge means you have a similarity of experience, same experience, you're desolate, no hope, need help immediately. No alternatives, so you take refuge in that. Take refuge in the fact that there are no alternatives. Second part is taking refuge in the dharma. Taking refuge in the dharma means that you recognize that pain is all you've got. You can't figure out anything else. You would certainly hope you could, but that's it. But then you realize as Buddha did, taking refuge in the dharma means you're willing to work with that pain, willing to acknowledge that neurosis and use it as a path. And taking refuge in the sangha in this case means that other people have found themselves in the exact situation that you did. And you have certain respect for them because they already did so and took their refuge as well. Made their commitment, one hundred percent commitment, so you take refuge in the sangha – people have made that commitment, to work with their own neurosis and pain. So the teacher at this point, and the expression of devotion at this point is the example – example that it is possible to come down to earth, example that it is possible to deal with the kitchen sink, it's possible to deal with your ordinary situation of handling your checkbook and your dishes and your clothes and your automobile, whatever. It's possible to do so without thinking it's a dream. And at this point it's not important that the teacher is so far away from us. We don't have any resentment here because it's a desperate situation. So we don't feel that it's jealous because the teacher is so straight together, does his thing, but is purely sense of awe and a sense of feeling that we would like to commit ourselves to working on ourselves.

The teacher encourages us, says, “Yes, do this,” very simply, “Don’t do that – not so good,” almost like blind person being led: “Go left.” “Go right,” and we appreciate that tremendously because of our confusion. The teacher encourages us to practice meditation. Encourages us to connect ourselves with basic sanity, encourages our practice and encourages our sanity in everyday life situations, and we are very grateful of that because of the immediacy of the situation and so our devotion, in the point of view of hinayana, is directed towards a total

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commitment to practice and working with the, basically, feeling that we are lonely and confused.

Maybe we could have some discussion on that.

QUESTION: What's this emergency operation about?

VAJRA REGENT: Well, the emergency operation is purely just allowing yourself to be told, "Sit down, take it easy." Later on: "Go sit and meditate. You can do it." It's very simple instruction. Emergency operation is not something dramatic. It's purely because that the people are so confused. "I don't know what to say. I don't know what to do." The teacher just says, "Okay, go sit down over there. Sit on the pillow. Breathe out." That's emergency operation. "You're okay, you're not crazy."

QUESTION: You were talking earlier about how the nobility or other people in the East would put out feasts for people, for the priesthood, for people who dedicate their lives to the dharma twenty-four hours a day.

VR: There are people here and in Vajradhatu, here and in other places on the scene, who are doing the same thing.

Q: Are these people lay people?

VR: Well, I mean, the point is, we're talking about a more or less psychological state of mind. We're not talking about lay or monk or whatnot. I would say that these people are the same people. They don't wear robes, but they're doing the same thing.

Q: Yes.

VR: Yes. They've given up their life, so to speak. Dear, precious life.

QUESTION: I wonder what's going on in the spaces between the desperation things and the pain. That sometimes don't feel that desperate and it...

VR: Well, yes, that's quite simple. Between those spaces is the attempt to try and make pleasant situations which occupy your time at the moment, that's all. It's very short. Ashley?

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QUESTION: Could you just briefly go over where the sitting practice comes into the situation?

VR: Well, that's basically where Hinayana teacher comes in. That emergency treatment is quite extraordinary one, because you are completely flablungered [sic] and you have great ideas, you have read every kind of book, philosophies of all kinds, and everything's going around, and someone says, "Sit down over there. Just breathe out." That's basic sanity, just relate with organic situation, basically breathing, sitting, there's your body on a cushion in a room. That's all. That's emergency operation. Encourage you to relate to simply who you are, you are sitting there, just breathing. I mean it sounds so good. [Laughter] That you are going to just go and do it. Which we all have done. We did it because we were in such bad shape, we were in terrible shape. You know, we had no choice. It sounds absurd, but on the other hand we couldn't resent that absurdity. Because the person who was telling us sounded, they sounded very sure of themselves. And on the other hand we were quite distressed about the whole thing, and at the same time they were telling us something that didn't seem complicated, that seemed very genuine and simple: "Sit down, breathe out and feel yourself sitting there, sitting there. Body, mind whatever. It's okay." So we did it. Here we are.

Oops, two at once.

QUESTION: What about people who might come to the guru with a broader sense that things are all fucked up, not just oneself, but in general, or what about people that don't come with a sense of impoverishment necessarily, but from a nobler perspective?

VR: I think they're kidding themselves. They're kidding themselves.

Q: Well, I don't mean to imply that I'm asking...

VR: Yes. I'm telling you [laughter] they're kidding themselves. You come basically from the beginning, from the very step you take, actual beginning is being desperate.

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Q: So then maybe to perceive that things are fucked up for everybody, it has to come from personal feeling of direct experience.

VR: I should hope so.

Q: Well—

VR: Why else would you come to somebody? Why else would you ask somebody for help? Even if you're not asking, you're asking.

Q: Well, couldn't there be a sense of that you're doing okay on your trip, you're getting along—good stuff, but—

VR: No, absolutely not. You come because you are sick, and emergency room is right there and you can't even breathe any more. Someone is going to put a tube in your lungs, that's it, you know, come on.

Q: Well, I'm certainly not talking about my own...

VR: Okay, well, then who are you talking about? Other people here? There's nobody, absolutely nobody, who comes any other way. You walk in because you absolutely feel freaked out, and you've tried every little candy you can think of. If you didn't try the candy, you tried the health foods, if you didn't try the health foods, you tried the postures, if you didn't try the postures, you tried the machines, [laughter] it's all the same. It's all the same in that sense, you tried every possibility, therefore you're stuck. And the last thing that someone tells you, says: "Okay, sit down on that pillow."

Q: What about the case of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni?

VR: Hysterical Buddha? Who's the hysterical Buddha?

Q: I didn't, of course, mean to say that—

VR: What hysterical Buddha? I'm afraid I'm...

Q: Historical.

VR: Oh, I'm sorry. He did the same thing. He tried all kinds of goodies. Walking on fire, sitting on water, eating nothing, eating something. Sitting on thorns. He did finally everything. Finally he said, "Okay, I go in, just myself. That's it."

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Q: But he personally had a soft, comfortable life position.

VR: You mean before he tried all this, that's before he tried all this.

Q: Well, I'm talking about going out on the path, seeking something, seeking the guru, whether the guru....

VR: Well, you don't seek until you've tried a whole lot of stuff about entertaining yourself.

Q: Do you think asceticism is an attempt to entertain yourself?

VR: Absolutely. Hundred percent. It sure is. [Laughter] Did you try it? I did.

Q: Not that way.

VR: I did. Hundred percent. Woke up at four in the morning, didn't eat anything but vegetables, clean my nose with water and salt. Yes, I did that.

Q: Sure, but what would bring you to do that?

VR: A dream, dream, dream, dream of being Brahmacharya. Glorious, someone in robes, on a cloud. That sort of brought me, I did that, all because I hated myself as well. But you can't do anything. What we talked [about] last night, you surrender the self-hatred. Honestly.

Q: Do you think the Buddha was motivated by self-hatred?

VR: Absolutely.

Q: In the same kind of way?

VR: Absolutely. He tried the whole thing, from start to finish —

Q: He tried what was available.

VR: Well, so do we.

Q: But that doesn't mean we might later see through our attempts.

VR: To do what?

Q: Well, we might see through that it wasn't just another trip.

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VR: Yes, sure, we should, we absolutely should. At some point we should see through the whole trip.

Q: But the motivation for the trip itself might not be entertainment, it might be a sense that something is not...

VR: Well, we don't know. Come on, we don't know entertainment from a hole in the wall at that point. I mean, we're talking to each other, not strangers. Entertainment comes from the sense of being stupid.

Q: You – what makes this trip any different? I mean, we come and... we sit.

VR: Self-destruct.

Q: Yes, okay. [Laughter] Nonetheless, we sit, and we go to that pillow, and we get some relief from the pain.

VR: Do we?

Q: Is that our own psychology?

VR: Raise your hands. [Laughter]

Q: Well, you said that the emergency operation gives some relief from the pain.

VR: No, no, no, I didn't say that –

Q: Well –

VR: I said there's no relief possible, therefore, we need emergency operation.

Q: But it seems like at first you say, "Oh, well, here's the new cure." And you sit on the pillow hoping for something.

VR: No, no, no, no – not when you come to this pillow. There's no new cure, just surgery. [Laughter] Well, there's no new cure.

Q: It seems like at first when you sit on the pillow you say, "Here's the new cure" –

VR: Keep sitting then.

Q: –and that goes away.

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VR: Well, I don't know. Just keep sitting.

Q: The pain comes back up?

VR: I'm not going to say. [Laughter]

Q: Chicken.

VR: Completely, through and through.

Well, that's it, ladies and gentlemen, for tonight. We said enough, and I hope that you enjoyed your day today, [laughter] in the sense that you never enjoyed it before, and that there's no escape for us here. And we have to do what is necessary, simply as that. And we don't have alternatives; we're not fishing around for dreams of who we are, and we're going to accomplish as great yogis or siddhas or what. Doesn't make any difference. We're just working. That's all we're doing. So thank you all very much. Good night.

[END OF RECORDING]

TALK FOUR of FIVE

SEPTEMBER 06, 1976

We should continue our discussion of the approach to devotion, practice of devotion in the three yanas. As we said yesterday, devotion begins with the great respect for the teacher in the hinayana, tremendous respect for the clarity and sanity of the teacher, which is in contrast to our own confusion. And that respect propels us to practice and to work on ourselves. The teacher in the hinayana is like a traffic copy for our own minds. He says, "Slow down. Stop. Stop on the red. Go on the green. If you go on the red, you're going to get hurt." He points out our hallucination and our dream. And he says, "That was just a dream. This is real thing." If you're hungry, you don't eat the menu, or you don't eat the plastic food in the display case. You eat the real food. And he shows us the real food which manifest in terms of our practice and in terms of his example as a human being.

So we begin to feel better. The emergency operation seems to have been a success. Feel more relaxed. We can actually begin handling our world. We stretch out, feel better. Feels good that we can handle our world. We've done some practice, and we feel good about that. We're no longer bothered by our hallucinations. And we know they're just dreams, and we can relate to the kitchen sink, wash up our dishes, put on our clothes properly. It's not all that confusing any more. It feels better.

So as we stretch out, feel good, suddenly, a little irritation creeps in. Some more irritation of being humiliated. We start to discover that we were sane all along. That basic sanity already existed. That creates a little bit of a problem. We're embarrassed, embarrassed that we even went through all that confusion to begin with. We're embarrassed about seeing the teacher again, certainly after we poured out our whole stuff there. And he said, she said, "Go and sit." And we

sat, and we feel better. And now we feel slightly duped, because we realize that the sanity was already there. So we don't want to see the teacher again. "Well, if I can handle it, then what's the point? Why should I see the teacher? I did what he said, and I feel okay. And those problems are not problems any more.

This is where danger comes in the danger of spiritual materialism again. That because we feel capable of at least handling, handling the general aspect of our world, that we have a tendency to close down, try and solidify. And we have a tendency not to relate to our embarrassment. And yet we feel that there are tremendous potentialities that exist. We become aware that there is a necessity to communicate with our world, with our friends, with our environment. It's okay that we know about the basic sanity, but how do we work further with that? How do we order the right food? We might see that we don't have to eat the menu, on the other hand, we might order everything on the menu. There's a problem with the appetizer and the dessert and the entrée. How does it fit? How does it fit precisely in there? We feel embarrassed about that. We don't know how to order. We know how to eat, but how do we order? We realize that we have peeled away a layer of ego's skin. And because we have done so, such potentialities exist. "I'm going further." But we're confused about that, how to go further. We feel quite vulnerable with just this raw skin sticking out and completely visible.

This is where the teacher in the mahayana begins to come into play, or the kalyanamitra, spiritual friend. We have inklings of further devotion, that we would like to go further, but our embarrassment is so overwhelming that there's a tendency to hold back, close up, stay where we are. So our realizing that there are potentials propels us further in our devotional attitude to again go and see the teacher, in this case, the spiritual friend. And we do need a friend at this point. We need someone we can talk to eye to eye. The operation is over, we healed up. But what next? How do we recover properly? How do we begin to relate again? We need someone to talk to. Not someone who's fantastic and beyond our sanity. But someone who's right there, across the other side of the table, eye to eye, someone to talk to.

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At this point, the traffic cop becomes detective [laughter], super-cop. He acknowledges, he or she acknowledges the possibilities that we are even reluctant to talk about. He or she has the potential to dig out the little mysteries, the little clues to our trip. But because of our vulnerability, we are very shy of that. At the same time, we are confused about the details of our life. The general pattern seems to be okay. We've realized again that we have to walk to the bus stop and get on the bus, put in the dime. But it's a question of what do you wear when you talk to the bus stop? How do you walk—fast or slow? Things like that.

The fact that we have more space than we had before, more space from our confusion, allows us to look at the spiritual friend in a different light. We realize that the doctor in the emergency room is not simply interested in emergency situations. That he also has the skill to treat the cause of the disease. In fact, that he is quite willing to do so and to acknowledge the potentialities that exist in the relationship is quite alarming to us. We had hoped that it was all over. Operated on, sat, that's it. It's okay now. But the necessity to communicate to someone gives us a sneaking suspicion that there are more layers to go. Not only sneaking, but awful, awful realization that there's more than just that, there's more than that to go, which is dreadful. But since we have given up hallucination and we don't believe in that any more, we don't believe in our dreams, particularly, because we've experienced that they are not particularly real, there's no place to hide. So in some sense we have no choice. We surrender, surrender to the kalyanamitra, to the spiritual friend.

We have to surrender our idea of level headedness, of everything being just sane and good to a kind of nosy, knit-picky teacher. He is very embarrassing, she is very embarrassing, minds your business, pulls out those little details about your life that you hadn't noticed. You begin to see that he or she, kalyanamitra, has quite a lot of wisdom knowledge, tremendous capability. That this person can actually point out potentiality of our life, of our practice. You feel extremely enthused about that, tremendously good. You would like to go to the teacher and say, "I'm so happy that you can see these things. I'm so glad for your knowledge." But the teacher doesn't want to hear about it. Could care less,

shoots it down. Instead, teacher looks at some little picky point about you. Looks at your inconsistency and your flaws. And you tank to yourself, “Why doesn’t this person say how good I am? Rather than tell me what’s wrong with me, rather than pick on that little stinky point [laughter], that little point. It’s nothing. I’ve done so well, I’ve recovered, and now I’m here, you now.” But the teacher turns out to be much too exacting, looking too closely at us. It becomes extremely uncomfortable. And the relationship with the kalyanamitra, spiritual friend, is a very difficult process because we don’t want to be exposed further. We feel that everything has been going along okay, but why do I have to go further, expose more than that? So we don’t want to do that. We’d like to just pass this person in the hallway and say, “Hello.”

But something draws us back. We are drawn back by some sort of warmth, feeling of friendship, closeness with that person, because after all, he did perform that first surgery. And at the same time, he seems to be quite good at getting to those little details. So we go for our interview. Suddenly, our voice is too loud, or the sound of our voice is hollow. “Who said that?” Our movements are clumsy, we can’t find the door when we leave. [Laughter] We might trip when we come in. And he doesn’t seem to have any sympathy for that. It’s like having a spotlight on us. We would love to hide some place, but we feel there is no place to hide. There’s not much left to do but to surrender to the situation. We hate being there, but we can’t seem to leave. The fact that the teacher is coming sounds like a great idea. When he’s here, it’s completely uncomfortable, we wish he’d go already. When the teacher goes, we say, “Wasn’t it wonderful how he or she did that thing? [Laughter] Isn’t it great how they can do that? When are they coming back?”

We begin to have tremendous respect for the skill of the spiritual friend. It dawns on us that there is something going on here. There is a process happening with us. There’s not simply a nasty person there, but there’s actually something going on. That because of the person, the teacher’s insistence on exposing our little game of hide and seek, which we have tried to do for a while, trying to be anonymous in the hallway or on the stairs near the bathroom at Karme Chöling

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or wherever, that the teacher has been trying to point to our own intelligence from the beginning. That by being so heavy handed, that the teacher is pointing out how to work with embarrassment further. That by minding our business no knit picky, that the teacher is talking about our mistakes as further fuel for devotion.

And this is the message of the mahayana, of the relationship of the teacher and student in the mahayana. That it is necessary, and also that you can afford to step beyond your security of your basic sanity. That sanity and that sense could be a trap. Feeling good, feeling that you've accomplished something is just another trap. That there's something further that has to happen. That you have to communicate with the teacher, with your friends, with your environment, or else your sanity becomes a monument, stone, frieze, something unto itself, it has no relationship to anything else. And that is only possible when we have allowed ourselves to be put under the microscope of the spiritual friend. And because of that, we have developed intense longing and admiration for the qualities of enlightened action. That the teacher in the hinayana as a respected person becomes much more than that in the mahayana. A person who can actually pick out little things, a person who can actually act in such a way as to expose you further.

And our admiration for that and our feeling to go further pushes us to further devotion in the sense of committing our practice to working with all sentient beings. That since we realize the necessity of communication, then we realize that we can take a further step beyond our own security and work with the bodhisattva path, and vow to achieve enlightenment, not merely for ourselves, but for everyone else. And that is brought about with the direct relationship with the kalyanamitra, the spiritual friend.

Maybe we could have some discussion on that.

QUESTION: Might this knit-picking quality of the kalyanamitra also be reflected in the sangha?

VAJRA REGENT: In the sangha?

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Q: Yes.

VR: How do you mean?

Q: That at certain moments, members of the sangha might also take on this quality.

VR: I think so, but it's primarily because you have your relationship with the spiritual friend that begins to extend into your world.

Q: Are there also other times when you don't notice this quality just because you're too solid?

VR: I'm sure of that. Yes, certainly there are. It's not happening all at once. That the transition from the hinayana to the mahayana teacher doesn't happen in a particular point instant. It goes along, and suddenly you begin to click that someone is picking your bones.

QUESTION: In talking about stepping out of the security of basic sanity, it seems to imply that when we feel good, we're going to necessarily solidify our situation. Is that the implication?

VR: Yes.

Q: So we—it's always necessary to keep ourselves on a...

VR: [whispers] Paranoid.

Q: Yes. [Laughter]

QUESTION: It seems like at this point that it is terribly important that the teacher actually knows you in a very personal way. I guess this is related to a question that keeps coming up when you're dealing with large numbers of people. How is that done?

VR: Well, I think that because of the vulnerability of your state of mind, our state of mind at this point, that when you go to see the teacher that it's very difficult to hide what's happening. So he knows you, if he's a true teacher, or she. Because of that vulnerability of feeling just quite, just landed, something propels you in to see him, her, and you can't hide. Numbers of people is not important, you know.

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If you're on the path, walking on the path, you get to see the teacher, no matter what. It happens that way, that's part of it. Otherwise, there would be no path, particularly. That's the whole subject of our seminar, that there is relationship.

VR: John?

QUESTION: Is the problem of paranoia that we regard it as extraordinary?

VR: Which? The paranoia is extraordinary, or the sanity is extraordinary?

Q: The paranoia.

VR: That we regard it as extraordinary?

Q: Right.

VR: Well, in what sense extraordinary?

Q: That...

VR: Other than? Other than our normal situation, you mean? Or do you mean why are we not more paranoid? I don't quite get what you mean by "extraordinary."

Q: That it's a big deal.

VR: As a big deal. Yes, I think so. Exactly. That's simply a way in which the mind works, in which the path works, rather than a psychiatrist's term, particularly. Just what we mean here by "paranoia" is just simply awareness, alertness to the pitfalls of spiritual materialism. Simply as that.

QUESTION: In what sense is this relationship with a spiritual friend eye to eye? It still seems to me to be...

VR: Well, it's only with a friend that you can expose your humiliation. With the hinayana teacher, you have a tendency to feel hurt and need to be fixed. So you don't quite see the person really, the form. It's like going into the operating room, and you have sort of blurred vision, there is someone with a white uniform there. But later on, when you're better, things come into focus, and there's someone there, quite solid and inescapable. You can't say, "I'm drugged," you know. "I just had anesthesia." It's too late for that. You're there.

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Q: So is it a less sort of selfish relationship than the hinayana style, where you're simply trying to get something out of it? And all of a sudden at the mahayana level, you can begin asking, "Oh?" Saying, "How are you?"

VR: Yes, something like that, yes. That it's no longer that kind of emergency of wanting, desperately needing help, but feeling helped, but there's some kind of fog there. Even though you've been helped, how do I completely recover, where do I go from here? Then you have to sit down with someone, and he writes your prescription. There's no anesthesia involved.

QUESTION: To go into that just a little bit further, is there still that attempt to seduce the teacher at this point in some way? Is that how the—

VR: No, I don't think so. At this point it's purely trying to run away, rather than seduce, trying to hide the scars from the operation.

Q: So in that sense of awkwardness there isn't any attempt at seduction. There's just facing up to the awkwardness—

VR: More than, yes, more or less that—

Q: —getting into—

VR: —rather than trying to present yourself as fantastic. You already know he did the operation. That's the doctor there, you know. So you're wondering, "How can I explain that I'm healthy? You know.

Q: Yes.

VR: "I'm recovered, I'm healthy, can't you see?" [Laughter]

Q: Right.

VR: And he says, "Well, what about that little scab over there"? [Laughter] And you say, "What?" [Laughter] That's the spiritual friend. He's a friend because of that. That's why he's your friend, because he picks out the things that still need help, still need to be bandaged and medicated. Which basically means opening your jacket or your blouse, whatever, and saying, "This is what's left."

[Laughter] Which no one is anxious to do, particularly.

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QUESTION: The mahayana level of the path is characterized by shunyata –

VR: Shunyata.

Q: – and by the first bhumi, other things like that. I'm wondering if those necessarily dictate the mahayana teacher. In other words, do they coincide?

VR: Yes, I think so. How so?

Q: Yes.

VR: Well, first of all, generosity is that the teacher is not particularly concerned whether or not he catches your disease, or what's left of your disease, but he is willing to communicate with that disease openly, to look at the sores that are left and the scabs and whatnot, and actually heal them, work with them.

Q: So when you say that the attitude is that you're healed, actually what you're pointing to is maybe there's been an experience of shunyata, some dramatic breakthrough.

VR: Well, a kind of very little one, little one, yes, that you don't believe in hallucination any more. That's kind of a little shunyata. But there has to be more than that in terms of our world, your environment. How is that also healed in terms of shunyata?

Q: From the point of view of—

VR: Relating with the kalyanamitra is that you see that this person there doesn't particularly care about himself.

Q: Does dualistic fixation have anything to do with how our view of this friend that was once hinayana, was once an elder, and now, all of a sudden, he's –

VR: Well, sure, yes. Well, dualistic fixation goes along until you approach the vajrayana guru. Then it's shoved in your face. But before that, before that you're still looking at the fantastic qualities of the spiritual friend, which you might say is dualistic fixation. That someone could be so smart as to figure out your infection after your operation. That is, that you still have an infection in your stitches. And someone could be so smart as to figure out what the prognosis—is

that the word?—diagnosis, whatever—what it is that caused that. And you're still in awe of that knowledge that someone has the expertise to figure that out. So you mean to say that it's dualistic in that sense, which is important that it is in some sense. One—you know, we have to go along and surrender to something which still we think is greater, even in terms of means. We don't think at the level of spiritual friend, greater, in terms of some kind of deification or entity or whatnot, but just in terms of means, skillful means, how someone acts. And that's what draws us to it, that someone could act so skillfully. So we have longing for that.

QUESTION: What happens, what happens—

VR: What happens.

Q: —to the way a person would view pain if they, you know, after they've had the operation?

VR: Well, pain is no more, in terms of deadly pain. It's more like irritating. Nonetheless, it's pain, and it's just as, you might say, all encompassing as the other pain of being lost, of being completely desperate. This pain, in terms of the mahayana, is still as encompassing, but it doesn't have the same feeling of desperate, about to die. It has the feeling of itching everywhere. Look around the back, and everything is slightly creepy and visible, pimples all over, and not only that, but a kind of slightly leprosy. You know, that someone could see that your thumb is about to fall off. And you would like to think that no one saw it, and there's only one person who can see, that is the kalyanamitra again. He sees that, "Hey, you've got some problem there, itchy and non-healing, particularly. There are still stores everywhere." So it is still all-encompassing pain. And by the way, about that, that the point is that healing doesn't mean pain goes away.

QUESTION: Would you say that the sort of shock and resentment that we feel from being treated in such a heavy-handed manner by someone who is supposed to be our friend sort of stems from the fact that we have some preconceived notion of compassion as niceness or politeness?

VR: Well, I—

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Q: It sort of takes us a while —

VR: I suppose so, I suppose so.

Q: —to realize that there could be, you know, like generosity and heavy-handedness.

VR: Yes, sure. Well, I mean, I wouldn't even like to bring it to the point of saying about, talking about generosity and the like. It's just purely that you feel embarrassed and vulnerable. Later on, you begin to feel that's a generous thing that someone relates to you in that fashion. Even though you're vulnerable, that someone is not going to turn away because of your vulnerability, that they are actually going to relate to that. Then you begin to think about things like generosity and compassion, but not immediately so. Immediately so, you don't have that in mind, particularly. You have no idea of what that is. That's why relating with the kalyanamitra is embarking on the path of the bodhisattva. It's not that you understand compassion immediately. After you get out of the operating room, they put you in the thing, and they say, "Well, isn't this great that my doctor is going to come and see me." You don't want him to come and see you. You would like to sleep the rest of the thing out. [Laughter] But he does come and see you and says, "How's this? How's that?" You think, "Get away," you know. "It's okay, it's okay. It feels okay." [Laughter] But he has to pinch it and look at it, and you know, see how it is. So at the beginning you resent that, you know. But yet, you have the innate feeling that it's good that he does that. "I might get further improved." So you go toward it again, even when he comes in, you don't turn over and say you're asleep, you know, you go ahead with it. Later on, it begins to click that there might be something happening here. My exposure might be necessary in order to heal further. So that's the process of understanding what compassion is.

QUESTION: It seemed to me when I was thinking about it that there is some conflict between the attitudes of paranoia in the hinayana and the mahayana. It seems that the hinayana has some sense of censorship. You can't afford to indulge in anything that might be entertaining. And in the mahayana, the paranoia is much trickier.

VR: That's right, that's right. That's where the spiritual materialism could come in. And the paranoia is that you think that you're okay, cured, even though those little irritations come up. You say, "Well, what do I have to deal with that for? I've already made it. I'm safe." And that's where you have, that's where the necessity to relate with the spiritual friend comes in, because he won't keep it at that. He'll push it, stick his finger in. "Leave it, it's trying to heal." [Laughter] And this process we should understand in terms of the path, and that we've embarked on this particular path. And we shouldn't be chicken about that, because it is going to happen to everyone here, if it didn't happen already. And the reason I'm talking about these things of the approach to devotion, what we mean by devotion, is actually some kind of a means. How does it happen so that one increases one's devotion? And it's because of these particular incidents that happen in our life. They're not fairy tales. It's true, it happens that way. Just take a look around. You'll see that it happens that way.

It's necessary to be careful how well we think we are. And that's why we talk about our paranoia. How cured we think we've been, cured because of our long-standing practice. That we sat two dathüns at Karne-Chöling, therefore, we must be okay. Or we've gone back and related with our world and our job properly, and we sat at the Dharmadhatu two nights a week, and therefore, we must be okay. It has nothing to do with that. It's much more gut level than that. It has to do with your really feeling how raw you are, and who is looking at you. It's very easy to camouflage our vulnerability in joining and becoming part of, and practicing, so-called practicing. But practice has nothing to do with simply sitting on a cushion. That's only a part of it. The other part is a relationship with a teacher, and the necessity of that. That you can't just sit on a cushion and think that you've been saved. If you do that, you're just succumbing to some kind of blind faith. It's necessary to expose further, necessary to open up your jacket and say, "Well, this is where the wounds are." But not in kind of a voyeuristic fashion, particularly. But out of a sense of necessity, even though it's less necessity than in the beginning, when you ran up to find some sort of help. Still, you're drawn by the possibilities of exposing yourself further. In spite of

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yourself, you would like to expose yourself, which is a double-edged thing. You don't know how to work with that. It's completely schizophrenic. "How can I expose myself and hold back at the same time?" Can't do it, so you march in with all your nervousness, and you say to the teacher, "I'm nervous. I don't know what to say." [Laughter] The teacher says, "Well, let's talk about your practice."

Another one?

QUESTION: Yes. I'm curious about—do you feel that it's usual that practice will lead you to find the teacher, or more often, that there will be the teacher who will encourage you in the practice, and then you'll go through the experiences?

VR: There is only one thing that finds you with a teacher or the practice, and that is pain. Simply as that, nothing else. Intense pain.

Q: But suppose you would find practice. I mean, there must be people who practice and don't have contact with a teacher, haven't found a teacher.

VR: They don't have enough pain. They practice out of books. Yes.

Q: Not necessarily. They might be living in central Africa or Timbuktu.

VR: It doesn't matter where you live. When your guts start to turn around, you look, you find a teacher. It doesn't matter where you live, absolutely not. A miracle. [Laughter]

Q: Well, I –

VR: You can't be satisfied with a book. There are a lot of people in our sangha who sat for a year in some mountain or other, and after that they said, "Hey, I better find someone." [Laughter]

Q: Well, I was thinking of, you know, a particular case where I had been living in southern Spain, and I started to do a lot of painting late at night –

VR: Uh huh.

Q: – I was painting. And I started having experiences of shunyata, and I was very frightened and didn't know how to relate to anything I had ever experienced.

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And then one day I was going on the ferry boat to Gibraltar, and I saw a man on the ferry boat. And I said, "He knows." But I –

VR: Who said that?

Q: I said that to myself. I said, "This man must be a teacher, he knows." But then, of course, I couldn't just walk up to a strange man on the ferry boat [laughter] and say, you know, "Oh, you're a cute chick," you know. So that as duality. It would happen three times. I'd see that man on the ferry boat, and I would say, "Oh, he must be the teacher, somehow he knows."

VR: Yes, yes. What happened?

Q: My illusion [laughter] –

VR: Was he the teacher or not? [Laughter]

Q: Wow. I guess not. [Laughter]

VR: Well, so much for hallucinations. [Laughter] I didn't think it would happen.

Q: You know, it –

VR: That's great. [Laughter]

Q: Why?

VR: Because you allow yourself to expose your wounds.

Q: Well, no. I mean, well, you could expose your wounds.

VR: You did already. [Laughter]

Q: Really?

VR: You did.

Q: When?

VR: You don't know what to say, right?

Q: Right. [Laughter]

VR: "I don't know what to say."

Q: Right.

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VR: So someone says, “Well, tell me about you’re a, B, C.” And you say, “Well, A, B, Ceeee” [Laughter] Too late. You did it, you exposed it.

Q: Neither did I. I figured out something to ask. [Laughter] If you’re sitting there in the interview, right –

VR: Am I sitting here? What do you mean?

Q: No, I’m sitting here. In the interview.

VR: You’re sitting there.

Q: You’re sitting there.

VR: I’m sitting here. Okay. Right. [Laughter]

Q: Okay. And I say, “I don’t know what to say. I’m nervous.”

VR: Yes.

Q: Okay.

VR: Yes.

Q: And you say, “Well, tell me about your practice.”

VR: Right.

Q: So I say, “Oh, well, I’m having lots of problems, blah, blah,” and just trip out on giving my case history.

VR: Right.

Q: Well, what’s the big deal?

VR: Well, the big deal is that you’re nervous as you’re walking into the room. You were nervous to do that to begin with. You didn’t want to be embarrassed. But when you’re there, you do it. When you leave, you feel sorry you did it. [Laughter]

Peter. Oh, another one. Great. Fantastic. I wouldn’t want to miss—I would somehow have bad dreams tonight. [Laughter]

QUESTION: Well, I’m beginning to feel a little self-conscious myself. [Laughter]

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VR: Yes.

Q: I wasn't, when I found Rinpoche, I wasn't looking for a teacher. [Laughter]

VR: Yes. You weren't?

Q: I wasn't, no.

VR: What were you looking for?

Q: I was just turning the dial on the television. [Laughter; applause]

VR: Peter, I hesitate to say this, but you're the best P.R. Buddhism has ever had. [Laughter] Yes, so you turned the television dial, and there he was.

Q: And there was this talk show on educational TV. [Laughter]

VR: And he was there.

Q: Yes, right, and you know, he just seemed to make a lot of sense. So I got the book, and then about—

VR: And you read it, right?

Q: Yes.

VR: You read the book.

Q: Right.

VR: Then you discovered that you had pain. [Laughter] No?

Q: No.

VR: No, you didn't discover that. What happened?

Q: Oh well, I had pain all along, that's why [laughter] that's why I was watching TV, yes. [Laughter]

VR: Not only that, that's why you were flicking the channel. [Laughter] Yes, what happened then?

Q: Well, I don't know what happened but, I mean, I just, you know, I just was flipping the channel, and there was Rinpoche, and I was there, and—

VR: You were watching it, yes.

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Q: But I wasn't looking for a teacher. I wasn't—

VR: No.

Q: I was just looking for some kind of distraction.

VR: Yes. And it happened that way. It happened that way.

Q: Yes.

VR: Well, that's not a big mystical thing, particularly.

Q: Oh, I know it's not a mystical thing, but, I mean, I just feel sort of, I mean, I hear this whole thing about people looking for teachers, and yet I wasn't looking for a teacher, and I found a teacher.

VR: Well, it doesn't necessarily have to happen. Looking for a teacher doesn't mean that you're walking down the street or looking in the phone book, particularly, or even turning the channel. It means that there is something happening in you that hurts, really hurts. That's it. It hurts, and you can't shave it any way. It hurts. So you might take X number of pills, X number of drinks, X number of television channels, X number of discotheques. It doesn't matter what it is. You're just looking, hoping that some hopeful thing is going to come up. And when some hopeful thing comes up, like the guru, or the teacher in the hinayana, then the pain becomes enormous. You can't get rid of it because some of the contrast, like you saw on TV, is so great between you and that, that it hurts like hell. You have to do something about it. So you call up the station and say, "Who is that guy?" [Laughter] And you go to Dharmadhatu, and you sit on your ass on a cushion, and then you feel better. And then you decide that there might be something else, which comes from mahayana, of having to expose yourself further, sir. [Laughter]

Well, it's getting too painful to stay around here. So I think we should say good night, and I encourage you all to continue in the practice and continue in your study and practice, two things together, which is a combination which makes the Kagyü lineage work. That we don't deny intellect, and we don't deny

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intuition, but the two things must come together. So I thank you all, and good night.

[END OF RECORDING]

TALK FIVE OF FIVE

SEPTEMBER 07, 1976

As we continue our discussion of devotion in the three yantras, we have begun to realize that the spiritual friend is actually encouraging us by his constant heavy-handedness to be more open, and to expose our egos. And that message of openness and basic sanity is very much appreciated. We begin to feel quite solid and sane and begin to pick up on the process of constantly exposing ego without threat. Our little game of hide and seek has become quite transparent. And we surrender further to the spiritual friend in the sense that we understand the process. And we have tremendous attraction for the good qualities of the spiritual friend. We could say “good” in the sense of meaning skillful qualities. And again, we would like to actually possess those qualities ourselves. And in taking the bodhisattva vow, we confirm the fact that possessing those qualities is not particularly for ourselves, but rather that by doing so we can constantly practice and begin to shed our tough skin and become gentle, kind, and courageous people. And that is possible because we have seen the kindness of the kalyanamitra. That we have met in our lifetime someone who is willing to put up with our whole trip, our continual game. And so we submit, more and more. We become less shocked by our own action and our own clumsiness, and realizing that it is fuel for practice, we continue to go further in our relationship with the teacher.

But again, we have problems of spiritual materialism creeping in. And at that point, basically the problem is that we have become quite refined in our approach, and in dedicating ourselves to others, we have become even more refined. So there is a danger of a kind of subtle ego, of highly valuing those good qualities. By “good qualities” we are obviously not talking about idiot compassion, which you already have heard about. But the good qualities of

being able to expose ourselves and show our neurosis and work with other people that way. And at that point, things become somewhat patterned, secure, which is another subtle manifestation of ego creeping in.

So the teacher at this point begins to act in quite a different way, starts to shake up our routine a little bit. We're used to going to see the teacher, and our interview being in a certain fashion, and our relationship, other than the interview, social relationship, being a certain way. And suddenly, the teacher starts to change those situations. He forgets to acknowledge us as he walks by. He invites us for dinner but doesn't say a word to us the whole night. Which is very puzzling, because we feel we know this person, have a good relationship. Solid relationship, and suddenly, we're like a ghost, we're not there. It is necessary for the teacher at some point to manifest as the vajra guru. But before that can happen, there must be some break, some disruption of our routine, or our accustomed relationship with the teacher. So all these little tricks begin to be played on us. He used to ask our advice about a particular thing which we've become expert at. And suddenly he asks someone else. He starts to become embarrassing for us. Rather than we're embarrassed, he becomes an embarrassing factor. Starts behaving in a shocking fashion, and just when we thought everything was going okay.

The process of surrendering is, in the long run, quite a deadly process. There is nothing that you can hope to hold on to, even the relationship with your teacher. And I think there is an accumulated naiveté on all of our parts. We say that we are Buddhists, and we practice Buddhism, and yet we still feel that there is something to hang on to, even to the last. In some sense, the teacher represents our last stronghold.

The transition from the mahayana spiritual friend to the vajrayana guru is one of an intense love affair. That having subjected oneself to the turmoils and chaos of a relationship, and finally deciding that it was safe enough to expose ourselves, we begin to fall in love, or shall we say, we begin to admit that we are in love. We might have been inclined to be falling in love before that, but at that point the brilliance of the teacher is overwhelming. And it ceases to be just a

technical brilliance, but the brilliance of the person. Our admiration for good qualities begins to drift into admiration for just simply light and atmosphere. It is a sort of ecstasy that we don't really know what to do with. It's not hide and seek any more, it's simply a worker bee and queen bee. That we enjoy very much being in the hive and hearing that sound and tasting that honey. Everything is so sharp, so precise, so good in its way, so clear, that we begin to discover our passion. The fact that we've allowed ourselves to relax to the point where we can experience that is astounding. And that increases our love, our admiration.

And it becomes so much that there is nothing else but the teacher's world. Questions of our own existence don't even apply. There's purely this fantastic person who emanates such power and energy that you have fallen on your feet, from your feet, rather, to your knees, because it's so brilliant. I'm not talking in symbolism. This is actually what happens. At first we thought that it was wonderful that such a person could be so sane and know how to pour a cup of tea, where if [he] lifted the cup, the [check audio: ting?] would rattle and practically fall off. And then we thought it was wonderful that while we were having tea with this person, he picked up on our hypocrisy and exposed it. And now we feel it's wonderful just to be there. So much so that it becomes our salvation. That's where the problem lies. And rightly so. It's built in that way, because there is no other way to cut through the stronghold of ego except to make our desire completely dependent, that we have no other choice but to be completely in love.

And at this point it's not a matter of "Should I or shouldn't I?" It's "How often? How much time can I get? Can I just pop in for a minute and say 'hello'? Can I be a guard? Can I be a server? Can I do anything?" Even opening the car door can be a tremendously passionate thing. It's very tricky and we have to be quite careful, not in the sense of "big brother" watching how careful we should be, but that if we really want to commit ourselves to the teacher and to the path of the vajrayana, then we should know what dangers lay ahead. We should have some idea of what is in store for us before we just go tripping down the road.

From the point of view of the hinayana and the mahayana, your ego is still safe, somewhat stripped and looking rather feeble, but still kicking up a little bit. But in relationship with the vajra guru, your ego world is doomed. As you can see, the process of becoming closer and closer to the teacher in the three yanas is a very pointed and deliberate one. While encouraging your intelligence, also seducing your ego, getting closer and closer to the fire. The closer you get the more comfortable you feel, because it's colder behind you than it is in front of you. But as you walk closer, it gets hot and hotter, and at that point you wonder if your skin is starting to burn slightly, or if it's just nice and toasty warm. Well, in the vajrayana, there's no passport and no deliverance. There's simply the fact of how well you can stand the heat, and if you're going to burn or not.

Well, there is quite simply no other way, because we [check audio: can? can't?] hold on to the slightest thread and protect ourselves. Therefore, we embark on what is called the vajra path, the vajrayana, which is the indestructible vehicle, meaning that there is no way that you are going to come out of that alive in the ego sense. And if you think you are, I better warn you now: it's not going to happen that way. In fact, what you think is the furthest thing from what is going to happen. You can read lots of books and go to lots of seminars and hear so-and-so's and so-and-so's discourses on path. But when you stick your hand in the fire, it's going to burn. Simple as that. But it is possible to burn. Not that I want to hold out any hope for anyone, because once you begin, you had better finish. So therefore we can't say that everything is going to be all right. We have no idea. All we can say is you had better finish. It is going to be worse for you if you don't.

Our feast has gotten to the point where the whole table has been set, and we're sitting down and feeling quite comfortable, not awkward at all that it's so magnificent in our dining room. We feel suddenly okay about that, the candelabras and the drapes and the servants and the food coming out: it's great. But something begins to happen there. That we don't seem to see the end of these courses. They just keep coming out. And our host is eating away like he wasn't hungry at all—I mean, not full at all—just keeps on eating. And we feel slightly

strange about turning down anything because we made such a fuss about getting there. [Laughter] We wanted to be there at this feast of devotion. The vajra guru said, "You would like to come in here and have a feast with me? Sure. You said it, not me." That's something you should be aware of: it's not the guru's fault. You wanted it. You should be quite sure of that before you embark on any kind of vajrayana path. You asked for it, and you got it. And you will get it, if you ask. And you may begin to feel like you have to vomit, but then another course comes out, and you don't have time to vomit.

But something sustains you: you are still in love. Even though the whole situation seems incredibly grotesque—and from the point of view of mahayana, it's inhuman, it's not even for sentient beings or anyone. [Laughter] Who can handle this stuff? But you can't get out because you accepted the invitation. Not only did you accept it, you asked for it, you petitioned the invitation. The sustaining factor is your love affair. At some point the feast is over, and the guru says, "Good night," just like that. And you're stuck with a belly full. No one has any Alka-Seltzer, no one comes up to you and says, "Wasn't that wonderful," or "wasn't that terrible." You are just stuck there. He went to bed, she went to bed. There you are, sitting there. And you leave, wondering how in the world you can digest that whole thing.

Well, at some point it is necessary for the teacher, the vajra guru, to turn you out, let you go, cut the string, the umbilical cord of your love affair. Because we wind up in the end the same as the beginning: with just ourselves. And at this point, when you are turned out, asked to leave, there is such tremendous emptiness and loneliness that you feel there is only one thing that could ever satiate that loneliness, that hunger, and that is to return to see your teacher. But he doesn't answer the phone any more. And even if he does, he doesn't care to say, "I miss you." He simply talks about, "How's the weather"? But that being alone, desperately alone, nothing but the residue of your love affair and somewhat unrequited love, because you never feel that you consummated the whole thing. You never felt that the guru said, "You're okay, my friend." He

didn't quite say it, he left you out before the final thing was said, before the final dot above the "I." So you're stuck by yourself, the way you began.

And that loneliness is the best food that we could ever eat, simply because the loneliness becomes the guru. And the guru becomes our world. Separation is unavoidable, but because of the separation, we begin to understand what "guru" actually means. The guru is no longer a person, but the guru's face is everywhere, hundreds of faces, thousands of them, in the rocks and the dirt, in the wind and the trees, in situations, in pain, in pleasure. In other words, the guru is totally united with the student. But that can only happen if you are willing to face the emptiness and loneliness of your own life, my own life. That what you feared all along finally came true: that you are there by yourself.

And that kind of good fortune is only possible if you are willing to take the step of committing yourself to the vajra master. You might say that devotion in the true sense doesn't exist until then. It's just purely playing with toys, admiring concepts. But they are necessary because they push you further. And the guru ultimately pushes you to yourself. This is a purely desolate prospect. There is no hope whatsoever in it, there's no good time, absolutely none. So if you want [inaudible words] feast, you should understand ahead of time what that feast is all about. You have been nursed, coddled, patted on your back, brought along to the edge of the cliff. And when your back is turned, you have been pushed off. But it's not really sneaky, because you asked for it. If you want it, you can have it, but you had better make sure that you know what you are in for, because there is no particular help for you if you decide to join the vajra world. Friends, family, books, experiences, memories, and finally, the teacher: no help. If you think you can rely on your past and therefore be sure of making to the other shore, you are wasting your time. But in some sense, what I'm saying might be just pure rubbish. In some sense, because you are in love, you have no choice, but I'm afraid that it is up to all of us to figure out for ourselves.

Maybe we could have a discussion on that.

QUESTION: You said something very interesting that doesn't seem to make sense in one way. You present the idea of feasting in the vajra world as if we

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have a choice at this point. You say, “Be sure to know what you are getting into,” but it seems to me that there isn’t a choice.

VAJRA REGENT: Well, maybe not, but I’m not sure. You’re the one who wants the invitation. When it comes down to accepting the invitation, you should know what you’re doing.

Q: Are you talking about hesitation? Are you talking about—I don’t know what you’re talking about.

VR: Well, when you get the invitation, then you figure it out.

Q: I suppose.

VR: Yes. Yes, it does. We want you on tape, so later on when you get the invitation you’ll know you said something about it. [Laughter]

QUESTION: I was wondering if you could relate the seminar as a whole to the Karmapa and his upcoming visit.

VR: Who?

Q: Karmapa.

VR: I think the seminar on a whole relates to His Holiness’ visit, on the whole. Wholly speaking. What do you mean?

Q: Well, I mean, we’re speaking, when you’ve been speaking of the guru, I’ve been thinking of Rinpoche—

VR: Yes.

Q: —specifically. And so I was wondering what the relationship that we would—

VR: His Holiness and Rinpoche?

Q: No. That practitioners would have to Karmapa as—

VR: Well, all those different relationships that we talked about in the past four days? Same thing. See, we’re not talking about a once and for all thing. We’re talking about the way different people relate to the teacher. His Holiness may

come up here, and someone may think, “He’s such a sane person a wise man. I can relate to him that way.” And someone may think, “He’s so devastatingly skillful. He can figure out my problems.” So that can relate to him that way. Someone else can say, “He’s so uncompromisingly vicious.” It’s all the same: what do you want.

Q: Just that it seems that we might not have a person relationship with the Karmapa.

VR: Well, I wouldn’t worry about that. Any time you see him, that’s a personal relationship. A personal relationship means how you relate to the object of devotion. It’s not what they say to you, it’s what you want. You prostrate. They didn’t ask you to.

QUESTION: When you said that the relationship is never fully consummated because you feel that the teacher never quite sort of pats you on the back and says that you’re okay—

VR: Yes.

Q: I was wondering about the empowerment ceremony. I mean, how could you sort of—

VR: How could I say that?

Q: Well, [laughter] yes. How could you say that?

VR: That’s exactly why.

Q: Well, how could he say that you’re more okay than that?

VR: What?

Q: Well, it just seemed like that’s sort of some kind of, some kind of confirmation in terms of—

VR: [Inaudible words] purely. Still stuck with yourself. [Laughter]

Q: It sounds pretty ominous.

VR: See, even with that, it’s still goodbye. That’s [inaudible] kiss of death. [Laughter]

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Q: Good luck.

VR: You can't exist on dream or memory. You can't continue to go on thinking "Because I've been empowered, therefore..." There are real situations that happen after that, people and places and things that are real. Empowerments and ceremonies are just a dream.

Q: That's like you get your teaching certificate, and then you go to a ghetto school and—

VR: You have to be kicked out, you have to be pushed out, by yourself.

QUESTION: You spoke of ego having to become completely dependent, and then you get thrown out, and then the guru becomes the world. What happens, where is your ego then?

VR: Ego becomes the world. The same thing, you see. The three things are entirely related. That you put your investment in the guru, which is your ego clinging, until it becomes very fine, fine to the point of love affair. Love affair doesn't talk about the niceties of this and that, it's just being in love. And then you're separated, and that separation is the love affair. And that separation begins to dissolve into your world. So the unwinding and wearing out process finally takes place.

Q: That just happens, that—

VR: If you accept the invitation.

Q: —that it becomes that world?

VR: If you accept, you have to do it.

Q: It's something you do?

VR: Well, it's something you commit yourself to. Then it does to you. But first, you have to do it. Something is necessary on your part, as we have been talking about all along. Willingness to be thrown out, willingness to be lonely, terribly lonely.

QUESTION: You've presented the three yanas as somewhat distinct stages of development.

VR: Yes.

Q: Could you speak about the possibilities of having the three yanas within each stage?

VR: Having the three yanas what?

Q: Within each stage of development.

VR: Well, if you have an inclination to be in love and start falling in love, the beginning is somewhat similar to the end, so you have elements of the same thing throughout. You see, at first, you falling in love has to do with qualities. "I love that person because they have a good intellect." Or, "They dress really well." Or, "The way they handle themselves." But still, it's falling in love. And then you love that person because they don't give up on you. Once you pass the fascination [inaudible] qualities, even then they don't give up on you. They realize how horrible you are and how horrible they are, and still they don't give up on that. And then beyond that, you completely give up, and you're in love, and good and bad is not particularly important. So the elements of the end are at the beginning. It's basically a feeling of wanting something so much. That has to go through the process of wearing down, wearing out, and finally, just lying there, by itself. Does that make sense?

QUESTION: The fact that once you start you had better finish—you're freaking me out a little bit. I want to ask you if there is some specific point where you are taking the step—

VR: Yes, that is the vajrayana.

Q: Well, is there some particular thing that you have to do that's your formal start?

VR: Yes. Probably you have to take the samaya vow at some point. The samaya vow is the bond between you and the vajra master, in which you decide to dedicate yourself to his command, on the point of being destroyed if you violate

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it – destroyed psychologically, physically, doesn't matter. See, the whole question of the Vajrayana involves your body, actual body, physical body. That you have given all your little goodies except for your last stronghold.

Forewarned is fore – how does it go? [Laughter] Peter? Forearmed? Is that it?

[Laughter] Like the Mahakala. [Laughter] Is there a microphone over there?

QUESTION: The guru becomes the world.

VR: Yes.

Q: Ego becomes the world.

VR: Same thing.

Q: Then ego becomes the guru.

VR: That's right, completely surrender to him.

QUESTION: This is somewhat related to the question about the devotion [inaudible: to the?] Karmapa. You relate the whole thing to the guru as an individual, you know, and yet certainly in the beginning, and I guess at the end of the path, relating to Karmapa, and at the beginning relating to a meditation instructor, whatever – the guru in this case we all assume being Rinpoche – but how does devotion relate to the surrogates?

VR: Who –

Q: Yourself, for instance. I mean, you're –

VR: Oh, me. [Laughs]

Q: Not just you. But yes, you, specifically.

VR: Yes, yes. Well, I think it's purely one's own experience. We shouldn't do it by the book.

Q: I guess it's a question of is the devotion directed – what is the relationship of the object of devotion as opposed to just the act of devotion?

VR: Well, the object is extremely important. The object is what you put your money on, so to speak, what you bet on. It's extremely important. It's the whole thing in a nutshell, until the end, until it's switched around back to you. You

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can't help but do it that way because that's ego's tendency, to go toward something, which we think is outside ourselves, as being fantastic and beautiful and glorious and powerful and all the rest. So whichever way we can, we are asked to supplicate, give in to that, with eventual knowledge that it's going to turn right back on ourselves. That's where intelligent faith comes in. That we know we're doing it specifically for the purpose of winding down and erasing our own ego tendencies. So therefore we can't be fooled by hope. We can't say that we didn't know. We can't say, "No one told me it was going to be this painful." The whole point is that the object of devotion is there as a reference point to our ego. And you refer to that, give that your whole neurotic state of mind, whatever it is, offer that up as a feast. Eventually, it's given back to you, processed like airplane food. That's why I feel so lonely. [Laughs]

[Referring to the next questioner:] There he goes. There goes the invitation. He accepts, reluctantly.

QUESTION: What would happen if halfway through the feast the guru would die? What situation would you be placed in then?

VR: The guru would die?

Q: Yes.

VR: So would you then.

Q: So would you. Oh.

VR: Same poison.

QUESTION: You said at some point, I think during the feast, that it seemed like it wasn't for sentient beings, it wasn't for anything.

VR: That's right.

Q: Is that just the point of view of someone who is sort of suffering at that point, or is that, I mean, is that what it seems like, or is that what it is?

VR: That's what it is. You don't have all that much room for "seems like." Too tight, much too tight.

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QUESTION: Why is your body the last stronghold? It seems in some ways that's almost the first thing you look for ground.

VR: No. It's your dear life, your very life, which you finally associate with your body. Before that, you associate with your pain. "Oh, my goodness, such terrible pain." Then you associate with your mental trips. "Such a confusion of trips." Then you finally say, "It's just this."

Q: So how does falling in love relate to that?

VR: Well, falling in love means you would like to give little by little. Finally, you would like to give the whole thing. When you really fall in love, then knit picking on your hairs doesn't matter, you know. Seeing our little scabs—remember those scabs? Doesn't matter any more. The whole body.

QUESTION: I seem to be losing perspective. Why are we doing this? [Laughter]

VR: Because it hurts, Simple as that.

[SOME PORTION OF TALK MISSING FROM THE TYPED TRANSCRIPT]

VR: We couldn't miss this.

Q: So what do you do with that? I mean, where does all that energy come from?

VR: Which energy?

Q: Whatever it is to keep going on. If you've had [inaudible: hour whole?]

VR: Well, that's your love affair.

Q: —well, if it's been smashed, right?

VR: Well, then it becomes unrequited love.

Q: Oh, so you keep trying to get it back?

VR: You don't try to get it back. It just hurts because you love. You don't do anything about that. You love, and it hurts, and that becomes your world, and that's the voice of the guru.

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Well, we can't say all that much about this, and I think we've said enough so far. And I would like to close this Intensive Training Session at this point and express my gratitude to everyone for putting up with a tiger's cub in place of the tiger. But on the other hand, you asked for it. [Laughter] So thank you all very much.

[END OF RECORDING]