

Entering the Path
An Online Course on the Hinayana Teachings of Chögyam Trungpa
Taught by Judith L. Lief

Talk One: Hinayana Discipline

JUDY: Welcome. We're now beginning the study session of the program, and this is the first in the series of the main course . . . so it's called "The Main Course"—a very clever name for it!

I want to say a little bit about the study altogether before we launch in. I know people come from different backgrounds: some people are very scholarly, and they love to study, love to read; other people don't like it so much. Sometimes people had traumatic experiences in our educational system or have difficulty reading, so I just wanted to remind you that this is not like a university course, and nobody's being graded, and the point of the study is for your own benefit.

In talking about seminary programs or the study of Dharma in general, the Vidyadhara talked about practice and study as being like the two wings of an airplane: we need both of them. He talked about the extremes of being an arrogant intellectual with a conceptual understanding but no heart understanding, no transformational understanding, and he also talked about the other extreme of being a stupid practitioner who doesn't know anything about the tradition or practicing. And he said, "Well, to be a good Dharma student, you have to join study and practice." And I think what links the two of them together so beautifully is interest and curiosity—an inquisitive state of mind, which the Vidyadhara manifested to the extreme. Taking a real interest in your world—in your inner world, your inner experience, outer world, your work and relationships . . . all of life. And that will go a long way in terms of practice and study.

And the other thing he emphasized in studying the Dharma is that you're not exactly looking for "answers." He much preferred the quality of question. In fact, there was one of these phrases that's maybe said too much that he used, about the question being the answer. So that's something to think about: questioning. Anything you hear you should question and test with your own experience and your own understanding. Is it true? Does it make sense? Is it worth exploring? Questioning, it's said, is like hammering—hammering a raw chunk of ore. Hammering it and hammering it and letting the gold be worked out. In some ways, you are working with what you hear and are extracting the essence, extracting the gold.

So I just want to encourage you to enjoy the study part, and we've put into the schedule a period for reading, so you have time to read and enjoy this *Profound Treasury: Volume One* that we're working with.

I also want to say a couple of other little housekeeping things, and that is we're using all these terms. Chögyam Trungpa is the name of the founder of the Shambhala lineage, which is now headed by his son and successor Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. But he's referred to, sometimes, by the term *Rinpoche*, which just means "Precious One." It's similar to in the Christian tradition of saying "Reverend" . . . like that. He's also often referred to as the Vidyadhara, which means "the holder of knowledge": *vidya* means knowledge, *dhara* means holder. So I'll be using all of those terms. Usually *Vidyadhara* is the most common, so whenever I use that, I'm referring to Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche.

Okay, so now onward. I thought it would be useful in beginning this course to talk about the context a little bit, the context out of which all these teachings seem to arise—a little bit about how the whole book is structured. I've tried to provide ways to help you get the most benefit from studying and reading this kind of material, so I thought, "Well, what's the context overall? Where does it come from?" And I thought, "Well, it comes from nonduality," which is the center figure on this shrine [*pointing*]: Vajradhara, nonduality, nondual wisdom. That's the ultimate context from which this all arises. And the challenge all along with the people presenting the Dharma is how to awaken nondual wisdom through dualistic methods: through words, through gestures, through forms and rituals. How can all of those kinds of dualistic methods point one to nondualistic understanding?

There's another very common traditional image that I think is useful, even in reading something like this or working with a practice or relating to the shrine, etcetera, and that is, "Don't mistake the finger for the moon." If you're pointing at the moon and you're with a little child, they look at your finger and say, "That's what the word *moon* means?" These are all pointers. [*Picking up book*] This is kind of like a laser beam, a laser beam to the moon. [*Laughter*] But don't mistake the laser beam for the moon itself. These are just tools; they're just tools to awaken the understanding—awaken your heart, awaken your mind, give you a more fulfilled, peaceful life.

So that was a general, overall context. Then within that, obviously the context is the whole world of Vajrayana Buddhism and particularly Tibetan Buddhism and the lineages and traditions from which the Vidyadhara arose or was discovered within, and within which he was thoroughly trained in the old style within Tibet. In particular, as was mentioned in Chris's introduction to like who's who on the shrine, there were two main schools of teaching that Rinpoche or Vidyadhara referred to over and over again as his heart traditions: one of them is the Kagyü tradition, which is also referred to as the

practice lineage, and the other is the Nyingma tradition, the ancient tradition, another practice lineage. He had key teachers in both of those lineages, although he's recognized as a Kagyü tulku, or reincarnate lama.

But more important, in some ways, than those two streams was the attitude with which he was steeped, and that attitude is called *Ri-me*, and that means nonbiased, nonsectarian tradition. The attitude of *Ri-me* in Tibet was drawing from the richness and the practices of all the great teachers, no matter what tradition they were identified with. I think in the modern world the attitude of *Ri-me* extends . . . you know, we're in a period of history where all the great traditions and nontraditions—spiritual, psychological, scientific, etcetera—are all jumbled together in interesting, creative ways, and I think the attitude of *Ri-me* is respecting the teachings of the various schools and religions and psychologies, and also a sense of being open-minded, looking and recognizing wisdom when you see it, in whichever form it is—not just wrapped up with a bow or wrapped up in a robe, but wherever you encounter it. Having the attitude of a student.

There's a saying: "When a student is ready, a teacher will appear." I think that can be taken sometimes in a narrow sense, as though you sit there and say, "I'm going to try to get ready," and you think some kind of glorious figure is going to come and just lay teachings on you. Or it could have the quality of: when a student is ready, it's amazing—you start seeing teaching everywhere. It is everywhere. That's a part of the notion of sacred world. But we miss most of it, really. We just get into the grunts and groans of getting through our day, and the recognition of opportunities for awakening that pop up everywhere are kind of lost in the complexities and preoccupations of our conceptual minds and our personal dramas and all that, you know? So that's another context.

The next context for this work is really the encounter of the Vidyadhara with Western culture, and particularly encountering—in the case of North America—the culture of the early 1970s. There needs to be both students and teachers for Dharma to happen, so that meeting point somehow made it possible for these incredible teachings to start to be available to Westerners.

There were other pivotal kinds of interesting encounters that led to the forms that we have here. Barry had mentioned Trungpa Rinpoche's encounter with the Zen tradition and how influential his friendships with great Zen teachers was in terms of talking about what is a skillful means of presenting Dharma in the West. We have a picture back there [*gesturing to the back of the room*] of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, who was connected with the San Francisco Zen Center and Tassajara. He had a close association with Trungpa Rinpoche and it affected many forms. For example, the group sitting that we do is very

much inspired by Zen practice. If you think about it, it's like making this incredible meal with all these ingredients.

Another ingredient really was the monastic tradition, within which the Vidyadhara was trained. You know, his early training was as a monastic, and in Tibet they really like the monastic tradition. Tons of their children became monks or nuns. I mean, a *huge* proportion of the population became monks and nuns and were trained at various levels within that particular system. Very old-style system within a spiritual hierarchy, I suppose you could say. And that monastic training went all the way back to the early days of the Buddhism. You know, originally, when Buddha was just wandering around and teaching in India and people just went and followed along—the earliest form of monasticism—people cut their ties to their families and shaved their hair off, and all dressed the same, and that was kind of the early beginnings of the monastic tradition in Buddhism. In early Buddhism, there were monastic people who did that—they just left everything. They didn't have regular jobs, and they didn't marry and all that, or have children. There were also lay people who supported the training and supported the monks and nuns and also received teachings in exchange for the offering of generosity.

But there's a third type of practitioner—again, in terms of the origins of all this—that sometimes doesn't get mentioned as much, and that is the mahasiddha tradition. Mahasiddhas were not monks, and they weren't exactly lay people either; they were this kind of blend, and there were all sorts of types of them. Some of them worked in like factories and some of them were criminals and some of them were musicians and some of them just slept all the time. They had all sorts of different lifestyles, but they were completely dedicated to the Dharma and dedicated to practice and were very realized beings.

So in looking at all of these—and there are many more kinds of streams of influence that all came together magically, making all this possible—there's another interesting stream, which was the invasion of Tibet by the Chinese. The Chinese would put it otherwise, because there are always two views to every story. But we oddly enough were the beneficiaries of that violent takeover of Tibet, because that led to the Tibetans needing to flee their homeland and become literal refugees, and it was somewhat parallel to the Jewish tradition. It led to a diaspora of Tibetans all over the world, and prior to that, there was a very isolated quality in Tibet. If you were some kind of extremely brave explorer like Madame David-Néel or something, you might worm your way into Tibet and hear something about the Buddhism there, but for most people it was hidden away from the West . . . you know, just wasn't available.

So it's interesting how the different streams of this incredible, positive energy of the cultivation of compassion and wisdom coming from the Tibetan and the Buddhist tradition altogether, and the forces of violence and just basic human, historical stuff that happens, all converging, and as a result, Trungpa Rinpoche ended up in the West. And as a result, we are fortunate enough to be within the stream of teachings. You can imagine the change from kind of a medieval culture, isolated with clear systems, clear hierarchies, and leaving that all behind, all behind, and having to start over literally at every level. You have nothing. You're in a refugee camp and in a culture that is so, so different. The teachings may be the same, but the culture is so, so different.

Barry mentioned, in talking about "The Sadhana of Mahamudra," how there were some pivotal points in the Vidyadhara's life when he was pondering what to do with the weight of the cultural heritage and wisdom heritage that he held . . . how to convey that. You know, how to convey that in such different times, a different culture, a different situation altogether. He could have just set up as a lama somewhere, with some students around, and do the standard things or make them all monks or nuns or whatever and just do what he'd been trained to do within Tibet and just try to make that work, and he could have led a pretty, probably much easier, life than dealing with the kind of people he ended up dealing with, but he didn't do that. He really did start at the beginning, which is a theme of this talk: beginning at the beginning. He just cleared the slate and looked and let something new arise—what seemed to be skillful in these times and this culture.

As students started gathering around him, he didn't emphasize monasticism, but he also didn't emphasize a lay course. What he developed was the term "householder yogi." Householder yogi. Which is somewhat related to that third wheel, so to speak, that mahasiddha tradition. And I think he meant that it's not just that some people do the tradition and other people give them food, but he said that you can be in the world and totally dedicated to the practice all together. So he presented practice for people who are engaged in this world, who are not escaping from the world or trying to go to some better place (maybe we'd *like* to, but anyway . . .) He kept putting you back into where you want to go from. And to be professionals and skilled at daily life and skilled in practice and dedicated to the Dharma as householder yogis.

I remember talking to him once about monastics and the beauty of the monastic system, where you just enter a convent, or you enter a monastery or whatnot, and all you have to do is to study and practice, and the bell rings and you do the next thing; the bell rings, you do the next thing. It just sounded so great, so simple, and so nice. And you don't have to deal with children and jobs and husbands and the IRS and the US government and all that. And he said, "Well . . ." (he talked fondly

about the beauties of the monastic training that he received, but he said) “actually, this householder yogi path is much richer and is more provocative, and that’s what you gotta do.” [Laughter] So that’s what we’re all trying to do. Although he did concede and start a small monastery at some point, called Gampo Abbey. I guess it’s a monastery; it’s called an abbey. I don’t know the difference, but it’s the monastic side of what we do. So that’s a little bit of the historical, cultural whatever.

Also, I wanted to talk about the structure of the three volumes, in a way. This is just one of three volumes, and it is called *The Path of Individual Liberation*, or the path of hinayana. This term, *hinayana*, can be very confusing, because often it refers to particular schools of Buddhism, such as are found in Sri Lanka and some other places—Theravadan tradition. But in the context of these teachings, it refers to a stage of the path, not to a particular school of Buddhism.

There’s a tradition in the vajrayana, or Tibetan, tradition that’s called *lamrim*, and that just simply means “stages of the path.” Stages of the path. It took a very systematic approach to the Dharma, you know, to try to provide a roadmap for students to follow, from the very beginning to the very end. (Although there isn’t an end; it’s more like a circle.) And that was divided into three stages.

Hinayana, or *thekpa chung*, means “narrow vehicle.” So *yana* is an important term to know: it means “vehicle,” like a car or bus or bicycle or, you know, feet. The image of a vehicle is that it’s something you get in and it takes you somewhere; it’s moving. And the quality of the path is one of movement. Even though we practice being still, there’s a movement; there’s a sense of going somewhere at the same time. So stillness and movement. There are various ways you can think about vehicles, but again, it’s not so much taking on an ideology or a philosophy they’re talking about, but taking on something that will help you attain your destination. Just thinking about things won’t help you attain your destination, but getting into a car will. So this is meant to be applied—applied through practice, applied through contemplation and study. *Hina* means “narrow.” It’s called the narrow vehicle. Narrow vehicle: not in the sense of narrow-mindedness or lacking in some way, but in a sense of bare bones and precise and true and raw. No mathematics—nothing added or subtracted—just immediate, clear, simple. It’s considered the essential foundation for everything, for the entire path. Hinayana.

The second of the three yanās is the *mahayana*. *Maha* means “great,” and *yana*, again, means “vehicle.” So there’s a sense of gathering and settling and collecting. Naturally, there’s an expansion—an expanding out—and the mahayana vehicle is all about that. Or another way of looking at it is the beginning point: we have to work with our own shit or we won’t be much help to anyone. If we aren’t willing to look into our own minds, our own hearts, our own regrets, our own plans, our hopes, our delusions, our obstacles, etcetera, we won’t be much benefit. So it’s very practical. That’s one thing I like

about the Dharma: it's so practical. It says, "Okay, work with yourself, but work with yourself with the intention of preparing yourself to be able to contribute something to others, of preparing yourself to be able to reduce the suffering in this world, the confusion in this world, the utter chaos in this world." That's the second of the three vehicles.

The third is called the *vajrayana*. Again, *yana* is "vehicle," and *vajra* is "adamantine"—or I guess you could call it "diamond-like." It's sometimes called the diamond path. It's also referred to as *tantra*. That vehicle is called "indestructible vehicle," and it's based on diving wholeheartedly into the midst of phenomena in order to manifest the awakened state and to benefit others.

So, each *yana* corresponds to one book, but within that, the Vidyadhara goes through this progression from the very starting point of just looking at yourself and wondering what's wrong, all the way up to the end. He goes through this path joining two traditional maps—again, always bringing from the Nyingma tradition and the Kagyü tradition. The Nyingma nine-*yana* tradition is spelled out in detail, and the Kagyü tradition of the hinayana, mahayana, and then the mahamudra is also spelled out in detail, and he joins them together in his presentation.

So that's a little bit about the structure. It really is a map, and it really will lead you to your destination.

Another key term or assumption in looking at all this might be helpful. We talked about the idea of a vehicle, and then what is . . . vehicles have to go . . . how do vehicles go? Well, there are roads or paths. The notion of path is very important in Buddhism, and it's talked about in various ways—the noble path, etcetera—but the notion is that we are on a journey, that we have some intention of where we're going—it's not willy-nilly. There's an intentionality, and we're given directions, street signs and things kindly provided by the great teachers. Those who have gone before us have created a path that others can follow.

There's a story of Buddha after he attained awakening, that he thought, "Well, I have no idea how to help other people realize what I realized." And so from very early on there was a notion of, "Well, we have to help people. You have to help provide a path that will help them to attain the same realization that I myself have realized." Having the attitude of being on a path changes how we relate to our daily life. Having an attitude that we're just not getting through the day but we're actually committed to some kind of path and it has certain boundaries and disciplines and it places our life in perspective not just of our own path, but entering a stream of activity that connects us with people who for many thousands of years have traversed this similar path and in the future will do so as well. We're joining in a particular direction. We're saying we're going to enter into a direction that goes against the

stream, goes against a lot of the energy of our confused realities in this samsaric world, where it's just like get-as-much-as-you-can-for-yourself-and-forget-about-everybody-else, etcetera. Materialistic outlook.

So there's a vehicle, there's a path, and then there's the rider—the person who gets in the vehicle, the individual. And particularly, since this is the path of individual liberation, you say that that's *soso tharpa*, “individual liberation.” That's you. There's a lot of subtlety to the notion of individual. One is that nobody else can do your path for you. It really is personal, and every one of you will do it differently. Everyone has done it differently within the constraints of the tradition altogether. And you can receive teachings and you can have practices to do, and you can do all sorts of service and loop-de-loops, but none of that will save you. It all comes back to you, yourself, alone.

In one of the readings during the sitting, the Vidyadhara gave these examples of loneliness. Talked about playing a bamboo . . . the sound of a bamboo flute, or playing a . . . plucking a guitar beneath a waterfall. Remember that one? Plucking a guitar beneath a waterfall. Interesting image. Nobody can hear it; you couldn't hear a thing from a guitar being plucked under a waterfall. It's very beautiful, the thought of just contentedly plucking your guitar that nobody can hear.

There's a good side and a bad side, I suppose, to this notion of individual liberation. The good side is that . . . one thing that the hinayana teachings are trying to get across to us is that you are self-sufficient. You have what you need. You don't need anything imported. You have what you need. The people who have traveled on the Buddhist path are not like saints or magical beings; they're ordinary humans who have bodies and emotions and mind and who have what they need. That's the good news.

But how many people really feel you actually have what you need? When you're sitting on a cushion, you need nothing, but to actually feel that way . . . many people don't. Most of us feel we always need something: we're never good enough, we don't have enough, we're not smart enough, we're terrible practitioners, our mind is crazy, we don't have enough. But in fact, the notion of individual salvation is you *do* have enough.

The bad news is that it's up to you and that there's no particular magic trick and there's no particular savior that's going to help you. The Vidyadhara seemed to take delight from time to time, saying things like, “It's up to you, sweetheart. It's up to you.” And it is. The whole path is up to you. What you do with it is up to you. It is. That's individual liberation.

Later on in the course we'll talk a little bit about egolessness, but first we have to be individuals. You have to claim that individuality and acknowledge that—each your own voice, each your own shape and size, each your own obstacles. Fortunately, within that, there are a lot of people who have more

experience that can help you with that, and that is in the hinayana tradition: the notion of an elder. It's just a sense of when you want to learn something, just ask a question of someone who's practiced a little bit more or studied a little bit more and might know it. And don't hesitate; ask questions about everything.

The other side: there's soso and then there's tharpa, the individual and liberation. Or you could also translate that as "freedom." That's interesting to explore: what is that? We're "free." We live in a "free country." What do we need with liberation, right? What is that, you know? What kind of bondage are we talking about? What do we need freedom *from*? What keeps us from being free? What is that notion? What is liberation?

Liberation. It seems that it could be looked at in different ways, and it would be good to explore that. Do you feel free already? Then you can forget the whole thing and go home. [*Laughter*] That would be fine, and good for you.

STUDENT 1: No refunds! [*More laughter*]

JUDY: One of the premises, one of the odd things in terms of freedom, at least from the Buddhist understanding, is that if we look around for who is imprisoning us—who is a slaveholder, who's master—that's you. You are imprisoning yourself. That, again, could be hopeful or unhelpful news, so to speak. The hopeful news is, if you were imprisoning yourself, you can liberate yourself. (Going back to the possibility of individual liberation.) It's in your mind. It's how you're viewing yourself and your world that is somehow askew, messed up. And because of that, we suffer a lot. Individual liberation.

It's said that we're imprisoned by how we think about things, and we're imprisoned by our habits at every level—mind ruts and habits, addictions of all kinds—and we're imprisoned because we can't control our emotions. They're all over the place! You can't control your thoughts or habits or emotions, and that's like, "I might as well just lock the door and throw away the key!" You know? That's our situation. And those are what we're actually working with. And you could say, "Who did that? Who's . . . ?" You can't find anyone to blame. You can't find anyone to blame because it's us. Freedom.

But the good news is that we suspect, or we're shown, or we have the opportunity . . . somehow in our life, something pops up in our mind or our experience that makes us think we don't have to be like that. It could be anything. Some simple thing pops up in our mind. The Vidyadhara once talked about, for instance: Say you grow up in the middle of a big, huge slum, and that's your world. You're in the big, huge slum, slumming around and kind of mucking through the day. You have no idea that

there's anything other than the slum, so you do your best within your slum. And then somehow you get a glimpse that right outside, a couple blocks away, there's a really beautiful park and people that have everything. So then suddenly, you're not so happy. It wasn't like where you live. You think, "Well, how come there's all that beautiful stuff out there and I'm stuck here?" Right?

So in terms of mental world, something pops up in your mind and you think, "I'm not really happy the way things are going, and I know that my mind's not just a slum, but I have Park Avenue and all sorts of stuff in there . . . and Central Park . . . big forests and beautiful flowers. There's other stuff there." So there's a bit of a longing to figure out how to get from point A to point B, so to speak. Again: path, journey, traveler.

I want to touch on a couple other key issues that might help with this volume. In terms of how the Vidyadhara was presenting the hinayana: he presented it in terms of three traditional categories called *shila*, *samadhi*, and *prajna* in Sanskrit. This is very traditional. He wanted the books to as much as possible align with those qualities, which was possible up to a certain extent.

Shila means "discipline." Sometimes it's translated as "morality." Behavior, I guess, is another way of looking at it. It's everything from forms you work with. It's how you conduct yourself in your daily life. In particular in the hinayana path, the quality of *shila* is characterized by a restraint of a certain kind. Restraint. Not just acting impulsively on whatever thought arises, and not just blurting out whatever comes to your mind, and not just moving about kind of randomly. But there's a sort of dignity and restraint in your posture; there's a precision and respect for yourself, for the objects in your world, from the simplest things you do to the most transcendent or complex or whatever. There's taking an attitude of discipline—how you speak, how you move, how you think. Discipline: *shila*.

The second of the three, *samadhi*, refers to meditation practice—in this case, mindfulness and awareness. We'll talk more about that, but there's a sense of acting from a mindful attitude. Paying attention. Not just going through the motions. Mindfulness is not like walking on eggshells, trying to keep track of everything—that kind of thing—or like a busybody world, but it's kind of a relaxed attentiveness, a relaxed attentiveness in how you go about things. Suzuki Roshi used the phrase "readiness mind," which is great. You know, the mind is relaxed. It's not caught up, but it's not asleep. It's tuned up so it can respond nimbly to what arises. Readiness mind. That second quality of mindfulness, on just an ordinary level, means a certain commitment to the sitting practice on a regular basis. Sitting practice on a regular basis.

The third of these three qualities is *prajna*, which in this case means knowledge, study, understanding. There's a great respect for learning in Buddhism, and for scholarship. There's literally

gazillions of books now translated into English, and you could never in multiple lifetimes even make a dent in how many things you could read if you were so inclined, which is very interesting in terms of the history of the Dharma in the West. When I first started studying the Dharma, there were like four or five books in English that everybody read, and you could say, “Well, did you read this?” and you could cover the entire canon, because it was just whatever random books happened to be translated at the time. Now there’s an abundance of richness. And the written word, limited as it is—words are very limited—still are incredibly skillful means. For instance, the highest thing on this kind of shrine [*gesturing to her right*] is not an image; it is a book. Books are revered. They’re never put on the floor; you don’t step over them. They’re held in reverence, books.

So the quality of intellect is a clarity and sharpening. The quality of samadhi is a stillness—which in the movie the Vidyadhara called “a hard peace.” And shila is a quality of restraint, doing no harm. That’s a fundamental challenge—doing no harm. We harm ourselves and we harm others in so many ways, but mostly from being mindless.

I want to touch on two more things. (Sorry, this is a little longer. My other talk will be much shorter, I promise.) These are important, and they run through the whole thing. One of them is as the Vidyadhara says in the very first chapter, at the beginning of the book. He says, “The hinayana is characterized by absence of frivolity.” Absence of frivolity. So one might think, “Well, what’s that? Frivolity? What does it mean to be frivolous?” And I’d like to leave that to you to think about, because absence of frivolity . . . Not the same as just suddenly everybody’s uptight all the time about everything you do; that wouldn’t be very good. But what is the fruit of frivolity? What does it support? What does it lead to? Why do you think it’s a big deal? I’ll leave that as a question.

And finally, the Vidyadhara, in presenting the Dharma all along—and maybe particularly emphasizing it in the times that he was introduced in the Western world—made a big deal about what he called “nontheism.” Nontheism. That has several levels of meaning. It’s not simply saying nasty things about traditions like Hinduism or Christianity or Judaism. That’s not the main point. But—again, going back to this ground of personal liberation, individual liberation—I think there are two components that were primary in this nontheistic view. The first is giving up the looking for an external savior. Passing the buck, so to speak, with your own issues. Like in a play, the *deus ex machina* that’s going to come in and lift away all your obstacles and say [*pantomiming head pats and hugs*], “Good girl. Good boy. You’re great. I love you, love you. I’ll take care of everything”—the big mommy or poppy in the sky. He said, “Well, give that up.” I’ve known some really brilliant Christian teachers who would say a similar thing to their disciples or whatever. But it’s sort of like being babies. Grow up. Grow up. It’s not going to happen!

If you're waiting for it to happen, good luck to you. So he said, "Give that up. Come right back. What is your immediate situation? Deal with that, and don't expect help." Do not expect help, that someone is going to save you in any way.

I think another aspect of why he emphasized it so much at that time was that he considered and said many times that one of the major obstacles to making progress on the path was becoming overly religious: religiosity. Religiosity, and all the trappings that come along with that religiosity—that kind of preciousness, and the feeling of superiority, and the becoming very attached to your tradition, and then, you know, it goes on and on until eventually we're just killing each other off. That's what religiosity eventually ends up being. And it's not genuine—it's like a pretentious quality, religiosity—and I think he felt that people could fall prey to that because of exoticism and the colorfulness and then say, "Isn't that cool? Now I'm a this, I'm a that." Wear a special hat or something, or know a secret handshake, and they feel very special. And I think he was really trying to relax that quality.

It's a quality that's very deep within us—our ideas of what we're supposed to be like. Especially on a spiritual path, I'm supposed to be peaceful all the time, I'm supposed to be nice, I'm supposed to look a certain way and this and that, and all those ideas are just . . . it's like a jungle—you need a machete to get through them—and then finally you end up just simply who you are, as you are, and then you say, "Okay, ground zero." That's the hinayana: ground zero. Come back to that, and that's an incredibly fruitful place to begin.

The end!

So we have a few minutes for comments or questions or whatnot. Robbie?

STUDENT 2 (ROBBIE): Thank you, Judy. You said in his nontheistic approach there were two components: one was giving up looking for an external deity, and the second was . . . ?

JUDY: Religiosity.

STUDENT 2: Oh, okay, I see. Thank you.

JUDY: You're welcome.

STUDENT 3: Thank you. Thank you for the wonderful news that we're in charge of our own prison. It's liberating and disturbing at the same time. I wonder if you could say something about that a little bit

further, because as we all know, in this relative world we live in, there are definitely situations where our imprisonment is well outside of ourselves. Nelson Mandela came to mind, actually. So how do you relate those two things: that on one hand, we really are the orchestrators of our own suffering, and at the same time we live in a world where that's being perpetuated for many different reasons?

JUDY: Excellent. Thank you for that. It's true. There are a lot of literal people in literal prisons all over the world, and in situations not of their own immediate making, under which they are suffering. People in war zones, people in prison, people oppressed in various ways—economically, socially, etcetera. This is not saying that those real prisons don't matter, but it's saying that as an individual practitioner, there's a situation you're in, and there's your response to it. You can't always change the situation you're in, but take prisoner A and prisoner B—how would they deal with that? Or oppressed person A and oppressed person B. There are different responses: some can be much more effective and healing, and some can add to outside prison your inside prison, make double walls.

There's a traditional image of someone trying to deal with the rough spots in life—you know, the world being filled with thorns and sharp rocks and lava fields and whatnot—and the traditional image is, "Well, what are you going to do about that?" One of us will always try to cover the whole earth with leather so that it's nice and smooth and you never stub your toe. But someone else says, "Well, why don't you build shoes?"

There's still going to be those bad situations because that's the nature of samsara; there's a lot of suffering in this world. And when you study . . . later, we'll talk about the four noble truths, etcetera, and there's the . . . they make a clear division between the kind of social and political suffering that you're mentioning and your own personal suffering, and there are different things to do about each, you know? It's sort of like the AA thing, that serenity prayer: recognize the things you can change and the things you can't change. Being clear about that and working on what you can do for yourself and for others. Yeah. So you don't go crazy, because there are endless problems.

STUDENT 4 (DIANE): I could say a few things, but I'll limit myself to one. So it's just kind of interesting: On my way here, I stayed with my mother, who has recently remarried a man who is Christian, and he's a very devout Christian. Now she has rediscovered her religion and Christianity, and so I tend to try to avoid conversations with them because I don't want to get into a big debate. But I was explaining to them what this path was all about, and it was so interesting because they both . . . I guess I had low expectations, but they both zeroed in on just what we're talking about. Her husband said, "Oh, so the

difference between Christianity and Buddhism is in Christianity we look externally for our salvation, and in Buddhism we're looking internally." So to me, he kind of nailed that point just like that. And my mother's response to that was, "Oh, that sounds really hard, though, to look at yourself." [Laughter] And she was very honest. She says, "I need that. I need that someone external." And I . . . you know, I thought that was . . . especially given my mother, and that's another story . . . but that showed a lot of awareness on her part, that at least she was honest and just said that. So I just thought I'd share that. Very relevant.

JUDY: And you know, if we were honest with ourselves, we *all* long for that. We all long for someone to take care of us and to make it all go away. Don't we? I mean, I don't know anyone who doesn't long for that. It sounds good to me. So she's really right on in recognizing that. It's not different than us. And that's the other thing about nontheism: it gets down to the very personal level. It's not about one religion versus another so much, and some of the Buddhists can be the most theistic of all.

STUDENT 5: I just wanted to follow up Diane's comment, because that is often the image: that Buddhism is this very difficult thing—looking inward—and it would be nice to have this outer salvation. What comes to mind is that the Vidyadhara would often say, "You don't have to go out and create difficulties. You don't have to go out and look for things to make it hard." The point, over and over again, is just to wake up to our own obstacles and restrictions. Not to make it into a hardship case.

STUDENT 6: So when you were making this point, you said something about no one is going to help you. I've been thinking about that ever since you said that: the notion of help. And I was thinking this way and that way about it, but it relates to what you were saying about that if the student is open, there are many things you can recognize as wisdom: a personal teacher, or even there's this TV show that I'm getting addicted to which I think is very wise.

JUDY: Which one?

STUDENT 6: It's called "Call the Midwife." [Laughter] (Speaking of help, it's called "Call the Midwife"!). And it's very . . . I really recommend it. It's on PBS and it's so raw. I mean, it's all about birth and death and it's very raw, and I'm just impressed that there's no sugary overlay. It's very moving, and it's a teaching vehicle.

So in the notion of help, I guess help is your responsibility as well—I guess, from that point of view. And also, there's discrimination involved. There's this kind of help in which you just want something to come and solve all your problems, but there's actual help out there if you can connect with it. That's sort of where I came to. I don't know if you want to comment further on that.

JUDY: That was well said.