

**Chapter Two of Dharmakirti's *Pramāṇavarttika*
Advanced Buddhist Philosophy Course – Term 1**

Class 1 - 2014 Oct 1 – Wednesday¹

Institute for Buddhist Dialectics, McLeod Ganj, India

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Teacher - GESHE KELSANG WANGMO

TEXT MATERIALS & COURSE BACKGROUND

I want to say a little bit about the material I've prepared [for this course on the **Second Chapter of Dharmakirti's *Commentary on* [Dignaga's] *Compendium of Valid Cognition***, the *Pramāṇavarttika* [*tshad ma rnam 'grel*, ཚད་མ་རྣམ་འགྲེལ་].

You see there are two different types of material: (1) the actual material that we are going to use; and then (2) this, which is something that I may refer to in class but in general is just for you to use for your own your own study. It includes different charts that may make the material clearer. Many of the concepts that are explained here, are depicted in charts, and stuff, to help you understand it a little better.

Why this multi-term *Pramana* Course is beginning in Fall 2014.

For many years, the subject matter of this course [*of Advanced Buddhist Philosophy in English at IBD*] has been the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. That is a specific course that takes many years to complete. Each year, in the Spring and Fall terms, we would go through one or more of the topics of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* in exactly the same way as they are usually studied in the monastic institutions.³

However, earlier this year, the group of students from an American university that has a semester-study abroad program here in the IBD had the annual audience with His Holiness. At that time, His Holiness told me to do this text, instead. His Holiness has been telling different people to translate this text. For instance, when His Holiness was in Germany, in Hamburg, he told the Hamburg group to translate this text into German. A Geshe here [Thubten Palsang] is teaching this Second Chapter right now, I guess this is also maybe the advice of His Holiness, to a group of Chinese students at Tse Chok Ling.

When His Holiness told me to translate this text, His Holiness was basically referring to the root text by Dharmakirti. However, that root text is so difficult that when we study this text [as part of the *Five Fields of Study* that are the core curriculum at many Tibetan monastic institutions], we use a commentary by Gyalsab Je that includes all the verses of the root text embed in its commentary. Without studying Gyalsab Je's commentary, it is very difficult to understand the *Pramāṇavarttika*. So I decided to translate Gyalsab Je's commentary, too. So we have those two translations together.

² ROUGH DRAFT -



³ The *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* course is being temporarily suspended until the completion of this *Pramana* course.

When I started doing this, it took a long time; just a few pages took a long time. These two translations, again, on their own, are very difficult to understand. So what I did was I took explanations from contemporary masters and added those. I listened to recordings, like my own notes from classes, and then I listened to teachings; and then those teachings, I've translated into English and interpolated into passages that are especially difficult. So I just prepared this material; I did not compose it. I prepared it, that is compiled it; and then translated it.

Hopefully, this will enable this material to be taught in the same way as it has been for about 1,000 years. Well, in Tibetan, Gyaltsab Je's commentary was composed around the 15th century, so for more than 500 years this has been taught and debated in the monasteries.

So I would like to do is to give you a sense of this: how this has been taught, get the same explanations that we received.

Study Questions

And what I also did was, after each chapter there are Questions. The text handout you have is only the *Introduction*, which is about 10 pages, leaving aside the Table of Contents. This *Introduction* will just tell you the most basic things about the *Pramāṇavarttika*, this very important text that has been studied in the monastic institutions. At the end of the *Introduction*, and in the actual text, which you will be getting in a few days, I put questions. If you read those questions in advance or after you've read the material once – if you can answer them, great! If you can't, please go back over the material and then see if you can. These questions may help you to pay attention to certain ideas.

It starts off, who composed the *Compendium of Pramāṇa*? These are just concepts, ideas or information that may be helpful for you to continue your studies. Once we get into the actual text, after the *Introduction*, with each Heading, each Section, there are questions. Sometimes, they are debate questions; questions that we also tried to analyze, think about, analyze, debate.

So this is the first part. These are the Charts only for the *Introduction*. And then there will be more charts and the actual text, which I'm working on right now.

Did everyone get a copy? Everyone got a copy, great. For the next installment, please sign up: those of you who would like to have the next part of the translations so that we can get the proper number of copies.

Introduction to the Second Chapter of the Pramāṇavarttika

Let's go through this *Introduction* to the Second Chapter of the *Pramāṇavarttika*. So this second handout, this handout for this IBD course is on the Second Chapter of Dharmakirti's *Pramāṇavarttika*. The *Pramāṇavarttika* has four chapters, but the most important one is the Second Chapter. The other chapters are more abstract, if you like. They are related, of course, to Liberation, Buddhahood, the Four Noble Truths, etc., but they show techniques for understanding those concepts; whereas, the Second Chapter

introduces those ideas, but also the ideas, themselves; and why they are taught; this will be explained, if not today, then in the next class.

So the actual material, once you get it contains translations of two texts that I have started to translate. Of course, the entire texts, I wasn't able to complete. For this one month, I will teach as much as I can, and the material that I've prepared will probably be too much to complete in this month.

What I will translate, which will eventually be part of this entire package, is the Second Chapter of Dharmakirti's *Pramāṇavarttika*.

The following handout for the IBD Buddhist philosophy course on the second chapter of Dharmakirti's *Pramāṇavarttika* contains translations of two texts:

1. The second chapter of Dharmakirti's *Pramāṇavarttika* (*tshad ma rnam 'grel*, ཚད་མ་རྣམ་འབྲེལ་; [or in English] *Commentary on [Dignaga's Compendium of] Pramana*).

The words -- *Dignaga's Compendium of* -- are in brackets here. So really, the title is the *Commentary on Pramana*, where *Pramana* really refers to the commentary by Dignaga. You will hear about Dignaga, a very important person, who composed a commentary in India called the *Compendium of Pramana*, which was widely misunderstood. It was so deep and difficult that a lot of people didn't really understand it, didn't really get its meaning. So Dharmakirti, understanding that, composed a commentary on that, which is the commentary that we study, the *Pramāṇavarttika*. I prefer to use the Sanskrit, even though I do not always do that; but the English is so complicated. So I prefer *Pramāṇavarttika* for the sake of simplicity. So that's the part I've translated.

And, as I explained before, I've translated the second chapter of Gyaltsab Je's commentary on the *Pramāṇavarttika*.

2. The second chapter of Gyaltsab Je's commentary on the *Pramāṇavarttika*, called *Elucidation of the Path to Liberation, a Detailed Explanation of the Verse Lines of the Pramāṇavarttika* (*tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byes pa rnam bshad thar lam gsal byed* - ཚད་མ་རྣམ་འབྲེལ་གྱི་ཚིག་ལེན་གྱི་སྒྲིབ་པ་རྣམ་པའི་འགྲུབ་ཐབས་ལམ་གསལ་བྱེད།) – usually referred to as *Elucidation of the Path to Liberation* (Tib.: *thar lam gsal byed* - ཐར་ལམ་གསལ་བྱེད་).

Gyaltsab Je's *Elucidation of the Path to Liberation* is interspersed with the *Pramāṇavarttika*, for the commentary provides detailed expositions on the meaning of the verses of the root text.

As is typical for a lot of such commentaries, Gyaltsab Je's has a very long name, which is then abbreviated. Tibetans like a catchy title as in the West, and I guess, in this tradition, that is a catchy title. In the West, catchy titles are shorter, *How to be Happy*. Whereas, in Tibetan, they are much longer and say a little bit about what the text is

specifically about; they're very poetic. It is actually called, *Elucidation of the Path to Liberation, a Detailed Explanation of the Verse Lines of the Pramāṇavarttika*. Here I've used *Verse Lines* which means *Verses*. I've used both translations.

So, those are the two texts. Dharmakirti's text and Gyaltsab Je's text.

So, how did I translate those? Is it like, first you have the *Pramāṇavarttika* and then you have Gyaltsab Je's commentary? Actually, no. Because the way Gyaltsab Je composed his commentary. I brought his book here today; it is only the First and Second Chapters. His commentary is on all four chapters. The root text is interspersed in it.

So what Gyaltsab Je did is, first, he gave an introduction, not the introduction I'm giving here, just giving an idea of what to expect. And then the actual Root Text starts. Gyaltsab Je does a great job for us. Instead of just having the *Pramāṇavarttika* Chapter Two's 283 verses, I think it is, he subdivided the verses into different sub-sections. He takes a part of the Root Text, sometimes just one line, sometimes two lines, sometimes an entire verse; and then Gyaltsab Je explains what Dharmakirti is talking about. Then he goes to the next. Because this was what was meant when Dharmakirti first taught this text.

The other day I was talking to a friend, who is comparing a commentary together with Geshe Sopa, a commentary on the Lhag Tong Chenmo [ལྷག་མཐོང་ཆེན་མོ་], actually the translation of the Path of Special Insight from the *Lam Rim Chenmo*. She's prepared that part, and she gave me something to read. And I thought, 'Wow, that's so clear. That's so amazing. I can't wait until that is published.' And then I was thinking to myself, it is so funny, if you think about 200 years from now, people then will think, 'We need a commentary on that one. Who can understand it?' Because that which is clear in this day and age, now, in 200, 400 years from now, you'll need a commentary which explains that. Because everything has changed; times have changed; and therefore, we don't understand it anymore.

So I'm thinking that Dharmakirti's text was, initially, one of those texts. Well, okay, it was hard to understand, but some people just read through it and totally understood it. And they didn't really need a commentary. But then after some time that wasn't really possible any more, so you needed a commentary to explain that; until you got to Gyaltsab Je. So when Gyaltsab Je composed his text, I'm sure a lot of people went, 'Oh, now, I get it. Oh, that's so easy.' But now when you read Gyaltsab Je's text, you go, 'What?!' So you again need a commentary. It keeps going like that, and the commentaries nowadays, the books of His Holiness, maybe in 200 or 300 years, we will need commentaries on those now easily accessible books. So that is where this whole tradition comes from. They're not to water it down. Unfortunately, there is always something that gets lost, but even if we just read the Root Text, it would never be the same. Time changes; and things get lost, of course. But I am confident that the main texts are still preserved.

Therefore, Gyaltsab Je's text is still made easier than the very terse presentation of verses, where sometimes it just seems like words next to one another; forget about grammar or anything. So it is difficult to understand how far a sentence goes, because sometimes they are separated in the middle; and this part belongs to this section; and that part belongs to another section; and Gyaltsab Je knew exactly how to do that. How did he? He relied on commentaries that were available at that time; the Indian commentaries, plus there's a very strong oral tradition. In the Tibetan tradition, the

oral tradition is very strong; one teacher passing something on to the next, to the next, so the text is important but the oral explanation is just as important. So a lot of information was also passed orally.

But then, for you to know what to expect, basically, that there is Gyaltsab Je's text and then the *Pramāṇavarttika* is interspersed. So whenever the relevant part that concerns this specific verse is explained, then you also first have the verse or whatever lines are being explained, and then you have Gyaltsab Je's explanation, hopefully, making it as clear as possible.

And since those two on their own are not enough, then I interspersed them with explanations by contemporary masters such as,

Furthermore, since both texts are difficult to comprehend on their own, they are also interspersed with additional explanations by contemporary masters such as **Geshe Yeshe Thabgyal, Geshe Palden Drakpa, Geshe Wangchen, Geshe Gyatso, Geshe Tsering Norbu**, and others.

The order of the names of these masters is given in terms of their ordination, not in terms of whose material I used more or not. Some of these names may or may not be familiar. Geshe Yeshe Thabgyal, I'm not sure how well known is in Western Buddhist circles. Geshe Palden Drakpa, you will find his name mentioned in a lot of Western scholarly works, because a lot of Western scholars go to see him to receive teachings. You find his name mentioned in Jeffrey Hopkins' books. Gen Wangchen, I called him "Geshe," even though he says he doesn't have a Geshe title, because it feels odd not to call him Geshe, because he really is so incredibly qualified, so for that, I call him Geshe Wangchen. Then Geshe Gyatso is a Geshe from the Institute of Buddhist Dialectical studies, one of my personal teachers, Gen Gyatso-la. Geshe Tsering Norbu is also from Drepung Loseling. The first three are from Drepung Loseling. And then others, there are so many others, too, and I didn't mention all of them here.

But I added whatever explanation I had in the text. It will be clear in the text which explanations are from the two texts and which are from these contemporary masters because the fonts will be different.

What I'm doing right now, is I'm not reading through the material; I'm just explaining it. Once I get to the actual text, I'll start reading the text.

So you have those three parts: the *Pramāṇavarttika*, the *Elucidation of the Path to Liberation* by Gyaltsab Je, plus the explanations by contemporary masters. And of course, we will have class discussion and questions. Of course, your input is important. I totally encourage you to ask questions, or bring up points of debate.

What is Pramana

So here, I've already said it:

As the name of the text implies, Dharmakirti's *Pramāṇavarttika* is a commentary on Dignaga's *Compendium of Pramana* (Skt: *Pramana-samuccaya*, Tib.: *tshad ma kun btus* - ཚད་མ་གྲུན་བརྒྱུས་). The six chapters of Dignaga's *Compendium* are written in verse and constitute one of the most important works on *Pramana*. Here the Sanskrit term *Pramana* translates as “logic” or “epistemology”, although it literally means “valid cognizer.” This is explained in more detail below.

What is *Pramana*? Usually, when an explanation is given of the **Five Fields of Tibetan Monastic Study**, one of those five is called *Pramana*, which is translated often as *logic* or *epistemology*. But really, it doesn't mean as *logic* or *epistemology*; literally, it doesn't mean that. Literally, the word *tshad ma* or *Pramana* means *valid cognizer*; this is the translation I'm using. It is an awareness that understands, realizes its object.

This is based on an idea that is mentioned quite often in the literature on this topic: whatever we try to accomplish, we first need to have some understanding. Whatever we do, even in everyday life, you want to brush your teeth: you need to know what a toothbrush looks like, what is the difference between the toothpaste and shaving cream. Therefore, whatever we try to accomplish, something as simple as brushing your teeth, of course, accomplishing higher states of existence such as liberation or enlightenment, or just being happier, all depend upon understanding something, that is, understanding reality, things that actually exist.

The entire Buddhist idea is that we suffer because we do not understand reality. We don't understand how phenomena really exist – not just on their deepest level; but we live in this fantasy world, often enough, our projections about reality, that actually do not accord with reality. There may be a little bit of truth in whatever we perceive, but a lot of what we perceive are misperceptions; or a lot of what we perceive doesn't actually exist.

Therefore, it is important to understand a mind that actually understands reality, realizes – these are weird words. We don't speak in that way everyday. Sometimes we say, “Oh, I realize such and such is good for me,” but usually we say, “I know.” But then the phrase, “I know”, we use very loosely. Usually, I jokingly say in class, we read on-line, we Google, *e.g.*, “Is coffee good for me?” Then some guy with a Ph.D. from a fancy university says, “Yes.” And we never really bother to read the whole article, because it gets boring after some time. So from then on, we *know* that coffee is good for us. But then two weeks later, another guy from a fancy university writes that it is not good for us. So which is it?

Strictly speaking, to *know*, to *understand*, to *realize* is in relation to something that exists. You can only *know* something that exists.

Being good for you and being bad for you are directly opposite. Another example, the planet earth is round or it is square; it can only be one of those two; it can't be both. So you know one of the two, but you can't *know* both, because they are contradictory – not directly, but they are contradictory.

So the idea here is, first of all, what does it mean to *realize*? What does it mean, to *know* something. We can still continue using the word in the loose sense that we do, but here, we need to be more specific. To *know* something; to *realize* something: how do we come to *realize* something? How do we do that?

Therefore, *Pramana* here means *valid cognizer*, which means a mind that realizes its object. There's a little more to it that will be explained later on. Basically, most important characteristic of that kind of mind, that kind of awareness, is that it *knows incontrovertibly*. It *knows* its object 100%. And that object has to exist.

You cannot know something that does not exist.

You can perceive something; you can *think* it exists. That is possible, but to *know* – you cannot *know* something, let's say, 'Barak Obama sitting on this table': you cannot *know* that because he's not there.

Therefore, even though in English the topic called *Pramana* is often translated as *logic* and *epistemology*, really what it literally means, is *valid cognizer* or *valid cognition*, valid understanding. So why do we call it, *logic*? This will be explained later in some detail.

Biographies of Dignaga, Dharmakirti & Gyalsab Je – Track 2

First, I wanted to give you more general explanation about this text, and I thought it would be nice to start with the biographies to know who these people are; and our texts also start with the biographies. One of the commentaries we study has biographies. And of course, it's always beautiful to know the people behind that, to have someone we can relate it to; to see how hard they work; how amazing they were. Of course, if we have faith in the author, we are more willing to read their books, like we are more willing to read a book by His Holiness because we have faith in His Holiness, because we know who His Holiness is, then some unknown person. So understanding his incredible qualities, and likewise to be inspired by their stories.

And I think it is beautiful to think, sometimes when you go back to stories of the Buddha, for example, you imagine India at that time; this incredibly spiritual country. Of course, some of this is still there, maybe not as obvious as it used to be, but it is still a continuation of this incredible country.

In general, in those days when Buddha was around, or Dignaga and so forth, were around, India was amazing in terms of the philosophy that was available. Not just the Buddha's philosophy. Also, the philosophy of what are called the *non-Buddhists*. Actually, the word *non-Buddhist* does not include everyone who is not a Buddhist. It specifically refers to philosophy that existed in India at the time when Buddhism was around. So the Samkhyas, the Jains, the Nyaya, Lokha, and so forth, all these different philosophical schools who propounded views that were sometimes very similar to Buddhism, and sometimes, very different. Of course, what was incredible that Buddhists and *non-Buddhists* would debate with one another. They would actually exchange and learn from one another. This was very commonly done, and at some point, it came to such a point, that when a debate took place, in particular, I guess, in an official kind of setting, whoever lost the debate would have to convert together with his or her disciples, mainly his, to the other school. So it was important that the debates

went will; you didn't want to convert to a different system. I don't know what to think of this. It seems really bizarre. But anyway, that's what happened at that time. So the greater the debater, the larger their following.

So I will first start with the life story of Dignaga, then the life story of Dharmakirti, and last the life story of Gyaltsab Je.

Dignaga – Life Story

So, Dignaga, as you can see,⁴ was born – well, no one really knows the exact dates; so these are just estimates: 450-540 AD. This is the estimate that I found in most of the commentaries. You will find different dates as you check, but this is the one I found most commonly used.

So he was a proponent of the *Cittamātra* [Mind Only - སེམས་ཙམ་པ་] School Following Reasoning [nyāyānusārin; རིག་པའི་རྩེ་འབྲངས་], for those of you who are familiar with this philosophical system – never mind otherwise.

And he was one of Vasubandhu's four great disciples. I don't know whether you've heard of Vasubandhu [དབྱིག་གཉེན་], the author of another very important text, the *Abhidharmakosha-kārikā* [ཚོས་མངོན་པའི་མཛོད་ཀྱི་ཚོག་ལེན་རྒྱས་པ་]. Vasubandhu was the half-brother of another incredible Indian master called Asanga [ཐོགས་མེད་].

What is really beautiful about this is that you be a teacher, and be an incredible scholar, practitioner, master, and nonetheless, your disciples outdo you in certain fields. A true master is happy about the disciple being more knowledgeable, being better. They did put their part in, but from there, they developed further, so it is a subject of pride for a teacher, or used to be, when the student did better. Of course, if there is ego involved, that'd be a different matter; probably would be hard for a teacher.

So Vasubandhu had four disciples who outshone him in certain areas. Dignaga was better with regard to logic or epistemology. And then you'll see the footnote about the other three: Shtiramati was one, and he was more learned than Vasubandhu in *Abhidharma*. Gunaprabha was more learned in the *Vinaya*, and Arya Vimuktisena was more learned in the *Prajnaparamita*. So these are different areas of study. You can Google this and find a lot of information. If you Google, you'll find web sites that explain these in more detail.

Anyway, he was the one – he did learn logic or *Pramana* from his teacher, but he developed it to such a degree that he became more of an expert in the field of *Pramana* or logic, epistemology.

⁴ Dignaga (ca. 450-540 CE) was a proponent of the Chittamatra school Following Reasoning and one of Vasubandhu's four great disciples*, each of whom surpassed their teacher in a particular field of Buddhist study. Dignaga was more learned than Vasubandhu in *Pramana*.

* The other three disciples were (1) Shtiramati who was more learned than Vasubandhu in *Abhidharma*, (2) Gunaprabha who was more learned in the *Vinaya*, and (3) Arya Vimuktisena who was more learned in the *Prajnaparamita*.

Dignaga was born into a Brahmin family in Simhavaktra, near Kanchi in South India. At a young age, he became very proficient in the sacred Brahmin scriptures and the worldly sciences.

“Dignaga was born into a Brahmin family” – so he was not born into a Buddhist family – in a place that I cannot pronounce properly in south India.

His Holiness often talks about this: some of the greatest Buddhist masters, most of the greatest Buddhist masters were born in south India. So at a young age, he was taught the Brahmin system, scriptures. He became very proficient, a great expert. Plus he was taught the “worldly sciences”. What were *worldly sciences* then? Medicine, whatever were the *worldly sciences* of that time, whatever were the topics of a secular education, those are what he studied and became very proficient in.

However, he eventually lost interest in the spiritual system of the Brahmins, developed renunciation for the suffering nature of cyclic existence, and took ordination from a Buddhist teacher called *Nagadatta* (Tib.: *glang po byin* - གླང་པོ་བྱིན་) of the Vatsiputriya system, a sub-school of the Buddhist Vaibhashika School. Nagadatta named him Dignaga (Tib.: *phyogs kyi glang po* - ཕྱོགས་ཀྱི་གླང་པོ་) and gave him extensive teachings on the three baskets according to the Vatsiputriya system.

Eventually, he lost interest in the system of the Brahmins and for whatever reason, he “developed renunciation for the suffering nature . . .” -- I’m trying to remember if His Holiness talked about this during the teachings or during the question and answer session afterwards. Anyway, *developing renunciation for the suffering nature*, non-Buddhists did that, too.

Every living being has renunciation with regard to one type of suffering. What is that?

The Suffering of Suffering. Every living being has the *suffering of suffering* which refers to what we ordinarily call *suffering*. Every living being has renunciation, wants to be rid of that kind of problems and suffering. But that is not what is meant here.

There are different kinds of suffering; not just the *suffering of suffering*. What is another type, the second type? The *Suffering of Change* which refers to, give me an example of the *suffering of change*.

SAMMY: Impermanence.

GESHE WANGMO: No, not impermanence, that is not a *suffering of change*. Something that you experience?

Pleasure, our ordinary pleasures. Our ordinary happiness that we crave everyday; right. That kind of happiness, ordinary happiness, that is said to be *in the nature of suffering*. Why? Because if we don’t change that object, it is bound to change into suffering. Whatever is the object of that happiness, if we don’t change it, it’ll turn into suffering.

So that is what the non-Buddhists also recognize. Non-Buddhists knew that the ordinary happiness of this life was in the nature of suffering. But there is a third kind of suffering that they didn't recognize to be suffering: the *Conditioned Pervasive Suffering*, which refers to the five aggregates. Our body and mind, the contaminated aggregates which are the result of our previous karma and afflictions, so this body and mind is *in the nature of suffering*. And that is what he realized, that kind of renunciation, the wish to be free from that, that renunciation is unique to the Buddhist explanation.

So he “developed renunciation for the suffering nature of cyclic existence,” and he became ordained by Buddhist teacher who gave him the name or who named Dignaga, and gave him extensive teachings on what are called the *Three Baskets*, basically, Buddhist teachings, but according to the lowest philosophical system, the Vaibhashika [*Great Exposition School*, རྒྱ་བཤམ་སྐབ་]. I mean lower in comparison to the Prasangika [abbreviation of: *Prasangika-Madhyamika*, Middle Way Consequentialist School, ཐལ་འགྲུར་པའི་དབུ་མ་], but still very sophisticated.

Followers of the Vatsiputriya system assert a type of self that is inexpressible as something substantially or imputedly existent, or as being the same or different from the five aggregates. Followers of the Vatsiputriya system assert a type of self that is inexpressible as something substantially or imputedly existent, or as being the same or different from the five aggregates.

But it is a sub-school of that philosophical school called the Vatsiputriya system, which is interesting because one of the most essential teachings in Buddhism is the idea of Selflessness. The Vatsiputriya were actually the only Buddhist school that asserted a type of Self, but they said it was “inexpressible.” This is kind of like – many of these philosophical schools, I usually laughingly say, but it is actually true – I say it jokingly, but it is not just a joke; it is true. I mean, intellectually, the way I've been trained, I would say, I am a follower of the Prasangika. But the way I live, I'm not even one of the philosophical schools. I live my life according to some kind of non-philosophy. No reasoning, no logic when I act. And if I think about the Self, there seems to be something, but I can't really find it, so it is kind of *inexpressible*. There's something there.

Sometimes when you talk with groups of students, who've never heard about Buddhism, who are new to Buddhism, and you introduce the idea of Selflessness, and you say, “What is the Self?” First, they're like, “Yeah, it's here. There.” And you know, wherever. And after sometime, they start saying, you know, it's kind of like something that is beyond words. You can't really explain it, because when you look for it, well, it's very hard to find anything. So therefore, this kind of reflects idea here, where they say the Self is *inexpressible* as being *substantially or imputedly existent*. That is, *inexpressible as being designated* or *inexpressible as not being designated*. It is *inexpressible as being the same or different from mind and body*.

What does that mean? It's a nice way, I guess, there's a sense that there is a solid I that was asserted by non-Buddhist philosophers, so then this Buddhist philosophical system didn't totally move away from that idea; would not say that *there is no Self*, at least an *independent* kind of Self. They say, “Yeah, there is some kind of independent Self,

independent, self-sufficient I, but it is inexpressible.” So you can find it somehow, but it is not one with the aggregates, it is not different from the aggregates – the whole reasoning we usually do in order to deny an independent kind of Self: Being “one with the aggregates; separate from the aggregates; imputed or non-imputed.” We say, how does it exist? Is it imputed or not imputed? They say, ‘Okay. It’s inexpressible as any of those.” That is kind of a limbo, in-between kind of state.

Dignaga was instructed by his teacher to meditate on the inexpressible self. In an attempt to find and comprehend the inexpressible self, Dignaga is said to have kindled fires in the four directions, stripped off his clothes, and meditated day and night. When he reported back to his teacher that he was unable to find such a self, his teacher took this as an indirect criticism and sent him to study elsewhere.

After he had been ordained in that system, then Dignaga told him to meditate on that Self. It is said that he was so motivated, so dedicated, so determined to look for that kind of Self, so he put fire all around him. Either he meditated in the sun or when it was dark, he put those fires around so that there was this clarity, he could not miss the Self. He was totally naked so as not to be distracted by his clothing and so forth, and he was looking for the Self. This is how it is described in the biographies.

So he meditated day and night looking for that *inexpressible Self*. Wow, how many practitioners do you find nowadays who meditate day and night after receiving instructions on selflessness? Certainly, not me. I’d be like, “Oh, nice. What’s next?” Right.

So these were incredible masters. Not everyone, of course, but the ones at that time, I mean, there were no distractions, internet, cellphones, TVs, and so forth, so they could totally dedicate their lives. And of course, the other distractions that did exist, even those did not deter them, and they single-pointedly set out to follow the instructions of their teacher. Imagine we would all do this? The areas around the mountains would be fully occupied after His Holiness’ teachings with all these people meditating, but we don’t do that.

But he actually did, he went off to meditate, and he couldn’t find it. And so he went back to his teacher and said, ‘Sorry, couldn’t find it.’ And his teacher took that as an indirect criticism and sent him away, so he then went to the great university of Nalanda where he met Vasubandhu, and he became a disciple of Vasubandhu. There he continued his studies, his understanding. He “mastered the entire body of sutras and treatises.” So the sutras, you know what those are, and then the commentaries on the sutras by the great masters like Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and so are on the shastras.⁵

⁵ Dignaga went to stay at Nalanda Monastery where he became a disciple of Vasubandhu. He studied and mastered the entire body of sutras and treatises of the Hinayana and Mahayana, and became a great tantric practitioner, receiving instructions from Manjushri himself. He also developed great skills in debate and on numerous occasions defended the monastery against learned non-Buddhist scholars who challenged the monks in debate. Dignaga became particularly renowned for having defeated the great Brahmin scholar, Sudurjaya, who – as a result of losing the debate – converted to Buddhism together with his disciples.

At the time, it was customary for a scholar who lost a debate to adopt, along with his disciples, the spiritual system of the victor.

And he “became a great tantric practitioner” at the same time. Of course, it was all very secret, but in the biographies, it is usually mentioned that he became a very proficient or skilled tantric practitioner. And he “receiving instructions from Manjushri himself.” So he had visions of Manjushri.

And what is very important is that he “developed great skills in debate and on numerous occasions,” he was able to defend “the monastery against learned non-Buddhist scholars who challenged the monks in debate.” So they would come to the monastery, and it was dangerous, because you had to convert – and they didn’t always do that. There are stories of people who didn’t do it, but rather killed themselves before they’d convert to the system of the victor.

There’s a very famous debate for which Dignaga became very renowned for defeating a great Brahmin scholar called Sudurjaya, who as a result losing the debate had to convert to Buddhism together with his many disciples.

⁶And then eventually Dignaga left Nalanda, because he wanted to live a contemplative life in the forest in what is nowadays the Indian state of Orissa. And at that time, he had already composed quite a few works on *Pramana*, on logic, epistemology, but as he, himself, said, they were very fragmentary or scattered. He decided to compose a commentary that was a compendium of all those work, bring all of them together, and he composed his text called *The Compendium*. That is why it is called the *Compendium* because of the previous works or previous commentaries he had done.

So what he did was write the very first verse of that *Compendium*, which comprises an homage and a promise to compose the text. This is not how one composes texts nowadays. First of all, I don’t think there are many Buddhist commentaries composed nowadays that are in verse; right? Most people write in prose; it’s much easier to understand, I guess. It is just not customary. Maybe there are a few verses, but usually it is written in prose. But at the time, it was customary. A lot of the treatises were written in verse; even some of the teachings of the Buddha were in verse, and then, of course, Nagarjuna’s text, the *Fundamental Wisdom* is all in verse; Aryadeva’s *Four Hundred Verses*. And this work on the *Pramana* is all in verse.

Usually, you start off the first verse is usually a homage or, sometimes it is translated as, salutation, an homage to whomever you are going to pay homage to, the Buddha, Bodhisattvas. Who does Chandrakirti pay homage to in his *Supplement to the Middle Way*? Great Compassion, he pays homage to Great Compassion. So there are different objects of homage, but the authors always paid homage to someone. It’s similar to starting off the teachings with prostrations to the Three Jewels. So in the same way, in order to accumulate enough merit, at the start of the text, no matter how great the scholar is, he always bow to someone or something that is greater than himself.

⁶ Dignaga eventually left Nalanda in order to lead a contemplative life in the forests of Orissa. There he resolved to compose what became his most famous work, the ***Compendium of Pramana***, as a compilation of his many previous writings on *Pramana*, which, according to his own description, were fragmentary works. It is said that he wrote the first verse of the ***Compendium***, comprising the homage and promise to compose the text, on a rock at his cave hermitage:

*To the one who has become a valid cognizer, to that which wishes to benefit migrators,
To the "teacher", the "sugata", the "protector", I prostrate.*

*In order to establish valid cognizers, I will herewith create a single compendium of my various
fragmentary writings.*

Then next, oftentimes, sometimes implied but sometimes explicitly as here, there is a promise to compose a text. We don't do that. We don't start a text with a promise, from now on, I will not stop until I finish this text. But it was a bit like this, when great scholars make a promise, it is not like it is written in sand, but it is carved in stone. How many times do we start something, and we never complete it. Maybe starting with this kind of promise was a way to be sure, 'I will definitely complete this.' So it is explained that way, this promise, once a great master makes a promise, they keep the promise. So there's usually a promise to compose the text. Sometimes there is a purpose given for composing the text, and then usually, the actual text starts.

So I call it the first verse, but it is not the actual – there's like the body of a text, and there is the introductory part of the text. So it is the first verse because it is actually the first verse, but the counting of the verses actually starts after the homage and after the promise. So I will just read you this. He wrote this outside a cave. He took a piece of chalk or some kind of stone that he could write on a rock with, and he wrote those lines:

To the one who has become a valid cognizer,

That is the Buddha, himself.

to that which wishes to benefit migrators,

That doesn't mean – I wrote "to that which" on purpose; it is not that I became confused about whom and which. No, because what is it that wishes to benefit migrators? It is not a person.

STUDENT: Bodhicitta.

GESHE WANGMO: Great Compassion, but Bodhicitta is close enough. Directly, explicitly, it is said to indicate Great Compassions; but also Bodhicitta, love, these states of mind which wish to benefit others.

So Dignaga prostrates to the Buddha, "*the one who has become a valid cognizer*". That is the Buddha, himself.

Who possesses "*that which wishes to benefit migrators*"?

He prostrates "*To the "teacher", the "sugata", the "protector"*". The meaning of those will be explained to you, so I won't say much more. However, I thought if you stumble over "*to that which wishes to benefit migrators*", it is actually not a person; it is Great Compassion or Bodhicitta, Love, and so forth.

So that is the homage.

In order to establish valid cognizers, I will herewith create a single compendium of my various fragmentary writings.

⁷"When he wrote those words", it is said that "many auspicious signs occurred." Right, who knows? But of course, there are a lot of stories of that: the birth of a great being. In Tibetan society, there's talk of auspicious signs. And the writing of those words was said to be very auspicious and certain "*signs occurred, such as light blazing forth, the*

⁷ When he wrote those words many auspicious signs occurred, such as light blazing forth, the earth trembling, loud thunder rolling in the sky, and so forth.

earth trembling.” It’s not like an earthquake, an auspicious sign, just trembling a little bit. And then “loud thunder, and so forth.”

⁸And there was a “*Brahmin ascetic*”. At the time of Dignaga, when we say, *philosopher*, it sounds like just a bright guy who knew how to debate well. But it wasn’t just that. For us in the West, Buddhist study and Buddhist practice are different things. But they are actually the same thing. From a Buddhist point of view, practice and study, when you study, you learn something new; but in the Buddhist context, it should be a practice; it should change the mind. Then you practice, when you practice, you also learn something new, so it is also a type of study. So really, study and practice cannot be separated. In the West we do that. And also some Tibetans or Indians will, of course, do that. However, the ideal case would be that someone does the two together. The real, great masters, which is what is says in Dignaga’s life story, for example, you hear that he is a great debate, but he is also a great tantric practitioner; and not just tantric practitioner. if you are a great tantric practitioner, what is implied? You’re a great sutric practitioner, because without being a great sutric practitioner, you can never be a great Tantric practitioner. So just saying, he’s a great tantric practitioner means that he is a practitioner of all of the teachings of the Buddha, because if you can practice the highest, you must have the foundation of the other practices.

This means, and this was not just the case with the Buddhist masters. There were great scholars and incredible practitioners who had reached very high states of realizations, which is why their texts are even more precious. If they were just academically, who cares; but it is their realizations that are so important. But what I am trying to say is that this was not just true for the Buddhists; that was true for the non-Buddhists, too. You had incredibly learned and intelligent non-Buddhist philosophers, who were incredible practitioners, who were able to – what are the most common kinds of meditations that non-Buddhist masters were very proficient in? Shamatha, incredible states of Shamatha. They were able to stay or go into mental absorptions for days, for months on end. So to be clairvoyant was not a big deal. In those days, it was just a common feat, being able to read other people’s minds.

⁹ So this Krishnamuni, who was also a great Brahmin ascetic, he also had these clairvoyant powers. But having shamatha, does not mean that one doesn’t also have afflictions; afflictions are still present. Even a Bodhisattva on a high level still has afflictions. There’s still attachment, jealousy and so forth.

Here, this Brahmin ascetic, who had clairvoyance, knew what these auspicious signs – he didn’t just perceive them, he understood, ‘Oh, Dignaga, has just written something very significant.’ I mean, possibly, he didn’t know his name. But he knew that these words were responsible for the auspicious signs. And great envy was generated in his mind. And he went to erase the verse. He went to the cave while Dignaga was gone on alms-rounds, as was customary at the time. So just before noon, wherever they were living, they would take their alms bowl to the next village or town and receive alms. So at that time, he came and erased the verse.

⁸ A Brahmin ascetic called Krishnamuni observed these signs and through his clairvoyance understood that they were the results of Dignaga’s writing.

⁹ Driven by envy, he went to Dignaga’s cave while the latter was away on alms-rounds and erased the words.

10 So when Dignaga returned, the verse was erased. So he was like, 'Oh, what's going on.' So he wrote it again on the face of the rock, and again, the auspicious signs occurred; again, Krishnamuni knew about it and, driven by anger, went back to the cave and erased it again.

And then, again, Dignaga wrote it a third time, and he added a little note:

The third time Dignaga left an additional note that read,

"Please do not erase this verse just for fun because with this verse I am pursuing a great aim. Also, there is no point in erasing it out of envy since it is in my mind from where it cannot be removed. But if you disagree with these words, you should show yourself, and we will debate."

11 So that was the little note he wrote. So when the auspicious signs occurred again, and Dignaga was gone, Krishnamuni returned. He was about to erase the verse when he saw the note, and he decided to wait and debate. He was very learned. And they debated three times. Krishnamuni was defeated in debate three times, and when Dignaga to now adopt the Buddha Dharma as a result, he grew angry, and it is said that he manifested flames. He had this ability to manifest flame, and he burned Dignaga's possessions and his cloak. That is the story. Maybe he just beat him up. I don't know.

12 So disturbed by this, Dignaga felt that if he could not help this incredible Brahmin, envy is just a human trait; but on the other hand he was incredibly learned and proficient kind of person. So if he could not help this kind of Brahmin, how could he help all sentient beings? And how could he then compose the *Compendium of Pramana* to help sentient beings.

13 So he decided to throw his chalk up into the sky, and at the moment that the chalk fell back to the ground, at that moment, he would give up his intention to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings, give up his Bodhicitta, and instead, aim for self-liberation.

14 So he threw it up, and it never came down. As he looked up, there was 'Manjushri in the sky, holding the chalk.' Then Manjushri told him "not to give up his mind of

¹⁰ When Dignaga returned, he wrote the verse again, and again Krishnamuni came to erase it.

¹¹ When the auspicious signs occurred a third time, Krishnamuni went again to Dignaga's cave. But upon reading the note he refrained from erasing the verse and waited for Dignaga's return. The two debated and Krishnamuni was defeated three times. When Dignaga asked him to adopt the Buddha Dharma as a result of his defeat, the Brahmin ascetic grew furious and emanated magical flames that burned Dignaga's clothes and possessions.

¹² Distraught and discouraged by the Brahmin's reaction, Dignaga felt that if he could not help the highly intelligent Brahmin, how could be of benefit to all sentient beings by composing the *Compendium of Pramana*?

¹³ He threw the chalk with which he had written the verse up in the air, thinking, "As soon as the chalk touches the ground, I will give up my aspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings and instead strive to become self-liberated".

¹⁴ But the chalk did not fall back to the ground and when he looked up, he saw Manjushri in the sky, holding the chalk. Manjushri asked Dignaga not to give up his mind of enlightenment, and promised to protect him until he attained the state of a Buddha.

enlightenment, and promised to protect him until he attained the state of a Buddha.” He said, ‘Don’t give up. I’ll help you.’

¹⁵ And “He also asked him to compose the *Compendium* and,” and he made a prophesy “that in the future this commentary would become an eye for migrating beings.” That wording is a little strange. I was going to write, “would become *like* an eye”, but the Tibetan word for *like* is used very generously; they have more than one word for *like*, but they didn’t use it. So I decided in the translation not to use it either. It becomes an eye. So it is like, with this text, one is able to see reality; just as our eye is one of the tools for us to be able to see reality; likewise, this text will become like an eye, or will become an eye for future beings.

¹⁶ “Encouraged by these words,” Dignaga actually did compose the “*Compendium of Pramana*, which, along with Dharmakirti’s *Pramāṇavarttika*, has remained ever since the subject of study, contemplation, and meditation – at first widely in India, and then for centuries in Tibet, Mongolia, and the Himalayan regions.”

So it was good that Manjushri caught the chalk.

¹⁷ This is kind of the main part of Dignaga’s biography. There’s not that much more known about him. It says that he continued to travel around south India and further spread Buddhism by, I guess, building monasteries and schools, debating, and so forth.

This was his main commentary. He, of course, he had done all the fragmentary works, which are were said to have numbered 100, but the summary or compendium of all of those is this *Compendium of Pramana*, which is written in verse and has six chapters. If you can remember that, you can already answer some of the questions at the end of the Introduction on page 10.

And then he had a disciple called *Ishvarasena* (དབང་ཕུང་སྡེ་), “who composed a commentary on the *Compendium of Pramana* and later became one of Dharmakirti’s teachers.”

So Dharmakirti and Dignaga were not disciple and teacher. Some people think that because of their chronology, that they were close to one another. But actually they couldn’t have met, because Dignaga was long dead, for sixty years. But *Ishvarasena*, the disciple of Dignaga, was the link between them. He taught Dharmakirti.

¹⁵ He also asked him to compose the *Compendium* and prophesied that in the future this commentary would become an eye for migrating beings.

¹⁶ Encouraged by these words, Dignaga composed the *Compendium of Pramana*, which, along with Dharmakirti’s *Pramāṇavarttika*, has remained ever since the subject of study, contemplation, and meditation – at first widely in India, and then for centuries in Tibet, Mongolia, and the Himalayan regions.

¹⁷ After completing the text, Dignaga travelled around South India and greatly furthered the spread of Buddhism. One of his main disciples was *Ishvarasena* (Tib.: *dbang phyung sde* - དབང་ཕུང་སྡེ་) who composed a commentary on the *Compendium of Pramana* and later became one of Dharmakirti’s teachers.

Dharmakirti – Life Story. Track 3

¹⁸ Now, Dharmakirti's story, which is not as dramatic, a little shorter. So Dharmakirti was also a follower of the Mind Only School Following Reasoning. Like Dignaga, he was born into a Brahmin family in Tamil Nadu. The name of the town and kingdom is given. Just as Dignaga, "he trained in the Brahminical tradition and became very well-versed in non-Buddhist philosophy."

¹⁹ But then, he read a Buddhist text, and "he developed faith in the Buddha Dharma and started to dress in the style of a Buddhist layperson." It is interesting. There must have been some dress style. Nowadays, there's punk, funk, I don't know, the skinhead. In those days, the dress styles were the Samkhya, the Jain, the Buddhist. That's what determined the fashion people wore. So apparently, he dressed like a typical Buddhist lay person, and the Brahmins got annoyed by that, the fellow Brahmins in his community, and he was therefore expelled from the community. He was asked to leave.

²⁰ And just like Dignaga, he went to Nalanda where he eventually received ordination, and extensive teachings from a teacher called Dharmapala [ཚོས་སྤྱོད་]. Sometimes His Holiness mentions Dharmapala during some teachings, so it is a name that comes up every now and then. He's not as famous as Dignaga and Dharmakirti.

²¹ Then afterwards, Dharmakirti was aware of Dignaga and *The Compendium*, which was widely misunderstood. That will be explained later on. So, he encountered the student of Dignaga, Ishvarasena. And since he knew that he had directly received teachings on *The Compendium of Pramana* by Dignaga, he wanted to receive teachings on that text from Ishvarasena, so he requested Ishvarasena to teach him the text.

So as is customary, even nowadays, you have a copy of the text, the teacher has a copy of the text, and then the teacher takes you through the text, reads passages, explains it, just like a commentary, but in this case an oral commentary.

And it is said that he received this three times. Sometimes in the monasteries or in the monastic institutions, you read a text one time, and you go again to the teacher again. For example, Geshe Palden Drakpa, who is one of the Geshes whose explanations I've used in the latter part of the handout, he also teaches the *Essence of Eloquence*, again and again. He's taught it many, many times. And the same disciples go again and again. Because he possibly adds some explanation, or explains it differently. The disciple has matured, so the first time you hear it, you don't get as much out of it as the second time. SO it is not really so much about information. It is about getting a deeper understanding. You may understand the words, but a deeper understanding can only take place by hearing it again and again. So this explains why, even if His Holiness gives

¹⁸ Dharmakirti (ca. 600-660 CE) was also a follower of the Chittamatra School Following Reasoning. He was born to a Brahmin family in Tirumalai in the kingdom of Chudamani of Tamil Nadu. Until the age of eighteen he trained in the Brahminical tradition and became very well-versed in non-Buddhist philosophy.

¹⁹ Then, upon reading a Buddhist text, he developed faith in the Buddha Dharma and started to dress in the style of a Buddhist layperson. This angered the Brahmins and he was expelled from his community.

²⁰ Dharmakirti went to Nalanda monastery where he received ordination and extensive teachings from *Dharmapala* (Tib.: *chos skyong*)

²¹ Then he requested Ishvarasena – who was a direct disciple of Dignaga – to teach him the *Compendium of Pramana*. Ishvarasena taught him the text three times.

the same introductory teachings; and some of the things His Holiness said, at least during the Question and Answer session, he had said in Hamburg, and that was only a few weeks ago. But it affects you differently; it's different every time. SO that is why you go to the same teachings, if you listen with your heart, for lack of a better word, but you listen to take it to a different level, it is different. So this is why it was customary to receive a teaching again and again.

So Ishvarasena taught him that same text, *The Compendium*, to Dharmakirti three times. And it is said that because Dharmakirti was such a great master already at that time, and so learned and so intelligent, that:

After the first time, Dharmakirti's understanding of the *Compendium* had become equal to that of Ishvarasena; after the second time, it had become equal to Dignaga's; and after the third time Dharmakirti was able to recognize that some of Ishvarasena's assertions were not in accordance with Dignaga's views.

So he could see the faults in his teacher, how he had misunderstood Dignaga's intent. So whatever explanation Dignaga gave, at some point, the interpretation that Ishvarasena gave, Dharmakirti was aware that that interpretation was not in accordance with Dignaga's intent. That is pretty difficult if you see the actual text, which is quite short in verse form.

²² Anyway, so very respectfully, Dharmakirti revealed those, presented those to his teacher. This was not seen as a criticism. Just very respectfully, he would say, 'Well, I think this is what is meant.' And I guess, Ishvarasena understood; what Dharmakirti said made sense; and he was delighted. This again shows the quality of the teacher. He was delighted by his student's intelligence and he granted him permission, or asked him, possibly, even, "to compose a commentary on the *Compendium of Pramana* in order to refute those assertions" that he, himself had held.

So this is a real master, who has the humility to see his disciple's qualities and ask him to refute the master. This is still reflected nowadays. Sometimes when a student and a teacher debate, you can be quite rough with the teacher. There are only a few things that you can't do. Like when someone makes a mistake, you say, "*khor sum.*" That's just saying, 'Oh, you made a mistake.' It's kind of like a rough translation; not literal. It's like saying, 'You made a mistake; I'll prove to you.' And then in the beginning. Then when you have proven it, and the other person has given up their wrong views, you say, "*Tsa - Finished!*" So this you would not do with your teacher. You wouldn't do, "*khor*", you made a mistake, and you wouldn't say, "*Tsa.*" But other than that you can be as strong and debate, maybe not quite as strongly as usually. It depends. When someone debates with His Holiness, I don't know what that would look like. I don't know.

Still you are allowed to debate. And sometimes the persons who are debating become strong, but it's still okay. Everyone is smiling, teacher is smiling at the students. It's part of the whole thing, and except for those two phrases, you can do.

So this is reflected in this, that he would very respectfully point out those mistakes that his teacher made; and was then asked to compose a commentary that refutes those assertions. which were probably commonly held.

And also, it shows here:

²² After Dharmakirti revealed those mistaken assertions to Ishvarasena, the latter was delighted by his student's intelligence and granted him permission to compose a commentary on the *Compendium of Pramana* in order to refute those assertions.

Dharmakirti was also initiated into the Buddhist tantras, became a highly accomplished practitioner, and had a direct vision of Heruka.

Again, it is implied that he was an incredible practitioner. How many people have direct visions of Heruka? Of course, you could all have those; you wouldn't say anyway. But I guess it is still pretty rare.

23 And then it goes on, this was very interesting: the extent that people went to understand non-Buddhist systems, but also, this could maybe be misunderstood. Of course, in Buddhism, we talk a lot about not becoming a missionary. One shouldn't go around and do missionary work and try to convert people. So this seems a little contradictory to that idea: you debate with someone and then they have to convert if they lose. But on the other hand, although it was customary, so many didn't. Obviously, Krishnamuni didn't; and there are other stories of people who didn't convert. It was customary to do so, but I think it is probably, before you engage in the debate, perhaps, you would always have to take that into consideration, you may lose the debate. So my guess is, the debaters had in mind that in that case, 'Okay, I can convert into that system,' and they had that willingness.

But also, my guess is that Dharmakirti saw the potential in other people, and he possibly saw there was a non-Buddhist scholar who had great potential to become a wonderful Buddhist teacher; and in order to convert him, he became a spy. He became a servant of his family in order to learn about the non-Buddhist system, to learn enough about it to know the secret points, the intellectually difficult points that you need to understand to debate about them properly. So there is whole story about how he became a servant, and he served the family well. And from the wife of the non-Buddhist teacher, he learned a lot about the non-Buddhist system. I think it is Mīmāṃsaka. I've seen in some commentaries that he was a follower of the Mīmāṃsaka school, this family that he worked for. Then after he became very proficient in that system, he went to the next town and he challenged his previous master to debate, and he was so good at the debate, he defeated him. And then Mīmāṃsaka master, he and his family, they all became Buddhists. That is how the story goes.

24 Afterwards, Dharmakirti continues to travel across India, and of course, these masters became very famous and non-Buddhists would challenge them; they would challenge non-Buddhists. Of course, if the other person didn't agree, that was it; but if they agreed, there was always the danger of one or the other having to convert. And he converted in that way many people to Buddhism. Eventually, he arrived at the residence of a specific king, here is name is mentioned, "who had heard of Dharmakirti's great fame and invited him to stay in his kingdom."

²³ In order to deepen his understanding of non-Buddhist philosophy, Dharmakirti then went to work as the servant of a renowned non-Buddhist scholar, pretending not to be a Buddhist. He served him and his family for several years, learning all the secret points of that philosophical system. Later he challenged and defeated the renowned scholar in debate, converting him and his disciples to Buddhism.

²⁴ Thereafter, Dharmakirti travelled across India converting many people to Buddhism. Eventually he arrived at the gates of the residence of king Utpullapusa, who had heard of Dharmakirti's great fame and invited him to stay in his kingdom.

²⁵ He accepted and composed what are called the *Seven Treatises on Pramāṇa*. So he composed, not just the *Pramāṇavarttika*; he actually composed four commentaries on that text. So a Tibetan Buddhist scholar who has done the traditional studies always knows these, *tshay ma day dun*, they are called. I don't know the Sanskrit word. But * just means seven treatises on Pramāṇa, although the Tibetan word for treatise is not used, but that is how it is translated into English, and one of those seven treatises is the *Pramāṇavarttika*, the most extensive one. “[As well],” so on top of those seven commentaries, he also composed an auto-commentary on the first chapter of the *Pramāṇavarttika*; so a commentary on his own text, but not the entire text, only the first chapter. So these are the works for which he is most renown.

²⁶ But “”. It is said that most contemporary scholars didn't get it; they were too difficult to understand. And then the few who did understand the meaning, were “moved by envy.” I don't think they were all moved by envy; but there were definitely some who were jealous of this incredible achievement, these incredible texts, and “claimed that they were incorrect and tied them with a string to the tail of a dog.”

This was done at the time. At that time, things were done quite differently. There was no Amazon; no print and publish your own book. No. It was like when someone composed a text, it was checked and rechecked and rechecked, because it was all about quality, not about quantity. And so, I guess also the production of a text was difficult. If you wanted to have your own copy, either you had to copy it, yourself, the entire text; or else, have someone do it for you. Maybe that also explains the length of the texts. They were not that terribly long; and maybe, the verses also make it easier to copy. I don't know. But the point is, you composed a text; and then it was read by other scholars; and when if it was not considered to be of the kind of quality that was required, it was attached to the tail of a dog with a string; and then the dog would take it all over the place; and people would step on it. It was a sign of, don't try again.

STUDENT: Of contempt.

GESHE WANGMO: Well, no, at that time, the work really wasn't good, it was like, okay, so next time, you better make more of an effort. It wasn't always something negative. In this case, here, it was negative. Because people were envious.

²⁷ But Dharmakirti had a light-hearted responses. He said, ‘Oh, this is great. The dog runs through the different villages and spreads my teachings.’ So he saw it in a positive light.

²⁸ But he also added a verse at the beginning of the *Pramāṇavarttika*, just after the verse of homage and the promise to compose the text. This verse of homage and promise to compose is not the one I read before which was by Dignaga.

²⁵ Dharmakirti accepted and while staying there composed the *Seven Treatises on Pramāṇa* (Tib.: *tshad ma sde bdun* - ཚད་མ་སྡེ་བདུན་) – one of which is the *Pramāṇavarttika* – as well as an auto-commentary on the first chapter of the *Pramāṇavarttika*.

²⁶ However, most contemporary scholars were unable to grasp the meaning of the treatises. The few who understood the meaning, moved by envy, claimed that they were incorrect and tied them with a string to the tail of a dog.

²⁷ Dharmakirti's response was that the dog would run through the different villages and cities, and in that manner spread the treatises.

Anyway just after that – and we're not going to go into this – but this one is always mentioned in the biographies, so I thought I might as well mention it in the English version, too. I didn't put it in there at first, and I went to one of my teachers to check with him, and he said, 'You should put this part in there.'

So Dharmakirti wrote this at the beginning:

*Most living beings are attached to the mundane and not endowed with the dexterity of wisdom.
Not only are they not interested in excellent teachings, they are hateful owing to the defilement of envy.*

And here, I made a mistake:²⁹ The next line should be corrected to read [corrections are in bold]:

*This is why the thought that this [treatise] will be beneficial to others does not occur **to me**.*

Or:

*This is why **I think** that this [treatise] will **not** be beneficial to others.*

The word, *I*, is in the Tibetan. The word for word translation is:

This is why I do not have the thought that this [treatise] will be beneficial to others.

That's awkward, so I guess it is okay to say:

*This is why **I do not think** that this [treatise] will be beneficial to others.*

And lastly:

However, since I have generated great effort familiarizing [my] mind with excellent teachings, I am happy [to compose the treatise].

Now, Gyalsab Je also talks about this. People may think, 'Wow, now this is a little odd. Come on. Here's this great master, definitely a Bodhisattva. And he is saying, most living beings, you know, I don't think this is beneficial. I'm just doing this for myself.' Seems a little odd; doesn't it? Does this thought occur? I'm not sure it does; does it, to any of you?

Of course, yes. Santideva, when he starts the *Bodhisattva Way of Life*, he also says, 'I don't think I can benefit someone.' This humility, 'Other great masters have written much greater works, so who am I?' There's also that.

But this is, specifically, like, 'most human beings,' you know. So this is why in the commentaries, you find there's an explicitly explanation of this and an implicit one. There is something that he says explicitly, which is saying, 'Well, most living beings . . .'

And is that true? Actually, it is true. If you look around, most living beings, in this world, right? I mean, how many people really want to practice the Dharma, are really dedicated; don't want to do anything else? Even if they are Buddhist. I mean, most

²⁸ He also added a verse to the beginning of the *Pramānavarttika* (after the verse of homage and the promise to compose the text) that reads:

²⁹ *This is why the thought that this [treatise] will be beneficial to others does not occur.*

people in this world are not Buddhist. Past and future lives, and so forth, it is not something – and I think it was like that in those day, too. I mean, okay, at that time in India – but India's population was not that great at the time; it was definitely not a billion people at the time when Dharmakirti was around. It was a smaller population. Of course, many people believed in past and future lives at that time, but then those in other countries, following different religions did not.

And so, thinking of future lives, okay, maybe heaven and hell, in that case, people were careful. But most people, as it was then and as it is nowadays, are attached to just worldly happiness. Even those who call themselves Buddhist. You know, I'm very attached to my suffering of change; sorry. Can't give up my suffering of change; forget about conditioned pervasive suffering. I've renunciation when it comes to the suffering of suffering, but I had that when I was a little doggie in a previous life.

So “*not endowed with the dexterity of wisdom.*” Yeah. I look at myself, totally true. “

“*Not only are they not interested in excellent teachings*” Yeah. I am to some degree; but not really. My interest goes that far, and., “*they are hateful owing to the defilement of envy.*” Yeah. I mean, *envy* – we live in the 21st Century, our society works on competitiveness, jealousy, envy. If anything it has become stronger; and of course, it already existed then.

Sometimes, great teachers, I'm sure that other people were jealous of some of the great teachers. I'm sure there are people that are jealous of H.H. the Dalai Lama. It seems bizarre, but I'm sure there are. It's funny. When I was in Germany, the Shugden organization was there. They were really loud. They had this mantra, “Dalai Lama stop lying. Dalai Lama stop lying.” The whole day. People working in the area were like, “OMG. I can't wait until they're gone.” But it was interesting, because one lady came up to me and she said, “I really don't understand what all of this is about. I have no idea what they are saying. Shugden or something. I think they're just jealous of the Dalai Lama.” I left it at that. I thought, wow, jealous of the Dalai Lama. But, yeah, maybe there are some people who are jealous of His Holiness. So here, Dharmakirti experienced that, too, because of his expertise.

So there is definitely the defilement of envy. In Dharma centers or Dharma communities, there is also envy in any kind of community, the people one lives with; and it is usually the people we are closest to. Envy takes place with those. We aren't jealous of some guy on a different continent; right. It is usually the people closest to us.

So it is very interesting. He uses the word *hate*, but also *hateful owing to envy*. Such a painful emotion. Nagging – do you say ‘nagging jealous’ in English? In German, we also say nagging jealousy; it's an interesting expression. It is something that nags on you; it gives you pain; it keeps eating at you. It is not like anger, that may make you feel good for a few seconds until you regret lashing out. But in that moment, maybe you release something. Resentment is different; but this kind of anger that explodes. Or attachment, of course, there's always suffering involved, because there is always fear of losing what we are attached to or not getting. But envy is just so painful; jealousy is so painful; and there's hatred involved, too. So this is an important affliction that he mentions here, envy or jealousy. So:

This is why the thought that this [treatise] will be beneficial to others does not occur.

Or:

*This is why **I do not think** that this [treatise] will be beneficial to others.*

And it is really for me.

Actually regarding the last sentence:

However, since I have generated great effort familiarizing [my] mind with excellent teachings, I am happy [to compose the treatise].

Gyaltsab Je, at the beginning of his commentary, first explains the *explicit* meaning of this. This sentence is what he literally says, and it is obvious. He basically says, the same thing again, except the last line here, Gyaltsab Je explains it a little differently. I had great difficulty translating this. And it doesn't really make a lot of sense if I say it the way Gyaltsab Je explains it. He actually says,

I am happy [to compose the treatise] because before I was able to generate great effort to familiarize my mind, and now in order to increase my great effort, I am happy to compose the text.

So you can't put that in one sentence:

I have already familiarized my mind with these texts.

Why did he familiarize? Because he was at the beginning of composing his commentary, and he had already read the *Compendium* and other great minds, so his mind was familiar with those. He was happy because of that. On top of that, he was hoping to generate even greater effort in the future, so he was happy to compose the text. That's how Gyaltsab Je explains the literal meaning of this.

But then, very beautifully, Gyaltsab Je explains what it actually means implicitly. Because first he says, 'If that was really true, as Dharmakirti says, that there is no point, it is of benefit to no one, then why does he say, *most*? If you say it will be of benefit to no one, why would you say "Most [living beings] . . ." So it cannot literally mean that Dharmakirti thinks it will be of no benefit to anyone, because otherwise, he wouldn't have to say *most* "beings are attached." The word *most* implies that there are some who are different. There are some, some for whom this text is beneficial. So Gyaltsab Je explains this quite beautifully.

Since Dharmakirti didn't have to say that, which shows that he is saying he actually wants to benefit others. He doesn't think it is totally useless. Also, he composed the other six treatises. One is called the *Ascertainment of the Pramana*. Why did he compose that? He says there, that he wanted it for people to understand and appreciate how great Dignaga was. So he definitely have in mind other beings and wanting to benefit them. It is pointless, really, to say that he did not want to benefit others.

Then there's another person who says, 'Well, but he said that people are jealous and hateful owing to the defilement of envy!' Then Gyaltsab Je responds, 'Well, not everyone.'

The person who studies this text should make sure to get rid of their jealousy and hatred. In this way, he is showing what you should be like. By saying, 'Most people are jealous and so forth,' he is saying, 'Don't be jealous. Don't be full of envy. Have a pure motivation.' Gyaltsab Je cites two lines from the *Four Hundred Verses* by Aryadeva that say:

An impartial, interested and intelligent listener is called 'a vessel.'

A *vessel* is someone who is impartial, free of this jealousy, who is interested, who has a degree of intelligence and such a person, such a vessel, should listen to the teachings.

So Dharmakirti, by saying, 'Oh, this benefit no one and no one has the wisdom, and people are jealous, and so forth,' is saying, 'Don't be like that.' If you listen to this text, try not to be that. Try to be open, impartial and don't be controlled by envy and so forth.

He is not really saying, 'I don't think this is of benefit to others'; but he is saying, 'This will benefit those who are motivated the wish to understand this, who are impartial and so forth.' So it actually expresses his compassion.

Just to keep it brief. I do not want to translate the whole thing here, but basically, Gyaltsab Je is saying that we really should do this; it is important to have this kind of attitude to understand the ideas of liberation, past and future lives, and so forth, which are presented in Dharmakirti's text. And if we don't do this – and again, Gyaltsab Je recites another two lines from the *Four Hundred Verses*, which say:

What the world does not understand is seen as the Buddha's fault.

This is something. Gyaltsab Je also composed a commentary on Aryadeva's text. So he is kind of saying that oftentimes the student blames the teacher, the Buddha in this case, for his own lack of understanding, 'Oh, the Buddha did not explain this well enough. This is why I don't understand it.'

If we do not have the right kind of attitude reading this text, we may blame Dignaga or Dharmakirti, thinking, 'Oh, these guys, they really didn't know how to write this.' And, actually, in the commentary on Aryadeva's text, Gyaltsab Je writes:

This is like a blind person blaming the sun for not being able to see.

I really like that, "a blind person blaming the sun," the sun gives so much light, what else can it do. It is the greatest source of light, and still the blind person blames the sun for not being able to see. This is like blaming those great masters of the past. We shouldn't be like that. We should have intelligence, make an effort and work hard.

I thought to share this with you at the beginning of the study of this text, to keep that in mind. Of course, the *Lam Rim* starts with a discussion of what type of vessel one should be: open, listen well, not have all sorts of preconceptions, but listen with openness, humility and pay attention. So this is good to mention, what kind of vessel we should be, because this commentary is on a text that is metaphorically an eye of migrator beings.

Hopefully, in this way, it becomes clear that those four lines do not really mean, 'Oh, everyone sucks. I'm just doing this for my own benefit.' No. But to make sure that we do not fall into the category of those who are only interested in the mundane and who are hateful owing to envy.

³⁰ Then sometime later, after its composition, Dharmakirti taught the *Pramānavarttika* to two of his main disciples: *Devendrabodhi* and *Shakyabodhi*. They will be mentioned in our text, because Gyaltsab Je sometimes explains their opinions, etc.

Afterwards, he asked Devendrabodhi to compose a commentary on the text. However, displeased with the first draft Dharmakirti washed it away with water; displeased with the second draft he burned it. He finally accepted the third draft but criticized it, remarking that although the explicit meaning of the text was conveyed, the deeper implicit meaning was not.

Then as a result of that,

Thinking that no one would be able to properly comprehend his text, Dharmakirti added the following line to the end of the *Pramānavarttika*:

Just as a river into the ocean, [the meaning of this treatise] will dissolve into my body and disappear.

So, I really thought about what does this really mean; and I asked my teacher, 'What does this really mean? OMG, with him dying, the meaning is gone.' And it is really interesting, because it is said that at this point, when Devendrabodhi couldn't really get the deeper meaning, it seems to really be saying, 'Okay. When I'm gone, no one will understand this.' But all my teachers insist, 'Oh, no, no, no, no. That's not what it means.' Still people understand it. It's kind of similar to what he said earlier. It is like, 'Be warned. It is difficult. Don't just read it like a novel. Try to really understand what I am saying, the implicit meaning; otherwise, it will just be gone with me. But make an effort to read between the lines.' I think this is what he is saying. So it doesn't literally mean, 'No one really gets this any longer. Don't waste your time. Never mind.'

No, I think it is a warning to people: this is difficult material. You need to spend time on this and make an effort.

³¹ "Then towards the end of his life . . ." This is really just a little bit about his life, not a biography, but just some of the bits that have been passed on.

So these are the life stories of Dignaga and Dharmakirti. In Tibetan, these two are described as the great logicians or the great experts on *pramana*. They are also described as logicians, those who engage in great reasoning. And people may wonder why? Did they invent logic? By no means. Logic existed, Indian logic. I

³⁰ Sometime later Dharmakirti taught the *Pramānavarttika* to two of his main disciples, *Devendrabodhi* (Tib.: *lha dbang blo* - ལྷ་དབང་བློ་) and *Shakyabodhi* (Tib.: *sha'kya blo* - ཤ་ཀྱ་བློ་). Afterwards, he asked Devendrabodhi to compose a commentary on the text. However, displeased with the first draft Dharmakirti washed it away with water; displeased with the second draft he burned it. He finally accepted the third draft but criticized it, remarking that although the explicit meaning of the text was conveyed, the deeper implicit meaning was not.

³¹ Towards the end of his life Dharmakirti founded a school and a temple at Kalinga, where he passed away.

mean if you Google it, Wikipedia has a whole thing on Indian logic; and it is not specifically Buddhist logic; it is just Indian logic. It existed for thousands of years. So this tradition of debating and analyzing and reasoning has very much been a part of Indian culture, especially, the philosophical culture.

However, these two founded a system of logic, a system of deductive reasoning that was kind unique, different, and that was adopted by some of the masters of that era. Like *correct syllogisms*. A *correct syllogism* existed before: A is B because it is C. The Greeks used that, too. However, what are the criteria for a *correct syllogism*? What makes a syllogism a correct reason. We will go into it; I'll give you some examples of *correct syllogisms*. And to keep you entertained, I've got some drawings, too. I didn't do those drawings; I found them on-line. That's why you have odd drawings of people wearing shoes on their sofas, etc.

The point is, this is trying to give you an idea of citing a correct reason, and someone's response to that, and getting a correct understanding. So we do not have time to go into all of the details of correct reasons, and I could only go into this if we studied the First Chapter of the *Pramāṇavarttika*, which goes into all these reasonings. But I will try to introduce as much as is required to understand the Second Chapter. It is really not as hard as it may seem.

But the point is that this type of unique reasoning, this kind of tool, was introduced by them. They were very instrumental in introducing this, and it was adopted by the Indians. So if you study the handout in more detail, I think you will understand what I mean, because it includes examples of what Dharmakirti says is a correct reason and what someone else says is a correct reason. And what someone else, from there, you can see what the differences are.

I will just read this part:

Both Dignaga and Dharmakirti strongly affected the course not only of Buddhist philosophy, but of Indian philosophy in general. Their expositions on language, negation, direct perception, etc., were highly influential among both Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophers, but their greatest impact derived from their analysis of inferential reasoning.

I will explain more about *inferential reasoning* in the next class.

Dignaga and Dharmakirti are often described as Buddhist logicians, for they formulated a system of logic and epistemology that was based on a new form of deductive reasoning. Yet this does not mean that they were chiefly interested in the formal properties of reasoning. Instead, they regarded logic as a useful tool that enables Buddhist practitioners to eliminate their misperceptions, replace them with correct apprehensions of reality and eventually attain liberation and Buddhahood.

It is just one of those many tools, means and methods.

The debate format that is still very popular among Tibetan Buddhist students of debate is based largely on Dignaga and Dharmakirti's works. Dharmakirti's *Pramāṇavarttika*, in particular, provides Tibetan Buddhist philosophers with a standard vocabulary that is used as a framework for analysis of the various Buddhist scriptures. It also represents the epistemological foundation of the curriculum in many Tibetan monastic institutions.

This just gives you a sense that basically, Dignaga and Dharmakirti did not invent logic. No, no, it existed before. Sometimes it comes across that way, sometimes they're described as *pioneers of logic*. No. But they did introduce a system of reasoning that was a little different from what existed before.

And all of the debating is based on this. The first, preliminary course for these studies is called the *Collected Topics, due-dra*, that begins the study of debate, is all taken from Dharmakirti's *Pramāṇavarttika*, the First or Third Chapters. Sometimes, the Fourth Chapter.

So I want to leave it at that. That's enough for today.

If you have the time and interest, if you are one of the vessels implied here, please read in advance, because all of this today was easy. It was just stories to inspire you.

We will discuss Gyaltsab Je's life story in the next class, and then cover the *Eight Pillars of Logic*. If you study the *Pramāṇavarttika*, they are actually *Tools of Logic*, *Eight Tools of Logic*. If you know them, if you understand this section, all of Buddhism makes sense. Actually Buddhism, especially, the first two *Pillars*, are mentioned again and again and again in the scriptures. And then maybe these Charts will help you a little bit to understand.

So read it in advance and we will go through it next time. So the material is a little bit more difficult next time.

I am still checking and rechecking the material that I've prepared. I want to see one of my teachers Thursday. I've basically completed it, but there are little details that I want to double check with someone and make it available to you as soon as I can.

I'm not sure I will be able to give it to you on Friday [Oct. 3]. That will probably be difficult. But you still have material for Friday to read in advance, and you will have it to read for the next class, after His Holiness' teachings, which is next week on Friday [Oct. 10]. During His Holiness's teachings, we will not have class, but then the Friday afterwards, you will still have enough material here. Then you will get the other materials so you can prepare for the following Monday's class.

And here, on page 10, are the questions. Please read the questions and see if you can answer them.

If you can, then you've understood the most important point.

So let's do the dedication and I'll see you on Friday.