

**Chapter Two of Dharmakirti's Pramanavarttika**  
**Advanced Buddhist Philosophy Course – Term 4**

**Class 3 - 2016 April 22– Friday<sup>1</sup>**

Institute for Buddhist Dialectics, McLeod Ganj, India

Teacher - **GESHE KELSANG WANGMO**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>ARE EXTERNAL PHENOMENA TRUTHS OF SUFFERING &amp; IN THE NATURE OF SUFFERING?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Eight Worldly Concerns</i>	3
<i>Why are Non-Sentient Phenomena in the Nature of Suffering?</i>	3
<i>Are Buddhas' Bodies Truths of Suffering?</i>	5
<i>Not every Conventional Truth is a Truth of Suffering</i>	6
<i>Nature &amp; Purpose of Questioning in Debate</i>	6
<i>Meaning of In the Nature of Suffering</i>	7
<i>Afflictions &amp; Suffering</i>	8
<i>Root of Suffering &amp; Four Attributes of Truth of Suffering</i>	8
<b>REVIEW - BUDDHIST VIEWS REGARDING A CREATOR GOD</b>	<b>9</b>
One is One's Own Protector; Enemy & Witness.	9
Does a Living God who is Responsible for our Happiness & Suffering Exist?	11
Can God be Permanent & Self-Arisen?	11
Can Any Phenomena Exist Independently?	11
Can a Creator God be Permanent?	12
A God that is Permanent could not perceive things.	13
What if God was Permanent but God's Mind is Impermanent?	13
Can a permanent God create Sequentially over Time?	13
Three Times exist Simultaneously; but the Past, Present & Future of something are Different	15
Distinguishing the Law of Cause & Effect and the Law of Karma	16
Collective Karma & Creation of the Environmental Universe	18
<b>TEXT REVIEW: Refuting [the Idea that a Creator God] is Permanent</b>	<b>22</b>
An Unchanging God cannot depend on "other conditions"	25
Our consciousness defines us	26
Effects Depend Upon Multiple Causes	26
<b>TEXT REVIEW: Refuting [the Idea that a Creator God] is Impermanent &amp; Self-Arisen</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Introducing Text for Spring 2016</b>	<b>36</b>



**Chapter Two of Dharmakirti's *Pramanavarttika*  
Advanced Buddhist Philosophy Course – Term 4**

**Class 3 - 2016 April 22 – Friday<sup>2</sup>**

Institute for Buddhist Dialectics, McLeod Ganj, India

Teacher - GESHE KELSANG WANGMO

**ARE EXTERNAL PHENOMENA TRUTHS OF SUFFERING & IN THE NATURE OF SUFFERING? Discussion**

Remember your homework: what was your homework?

STUDENT: What is the *Truth of Suffering*?

GESHE WANGMO: Yes.

Regarding **external phenomena**, are they *Truths of Suffering*; and

**If external phenomena are *Truths of Suffering*, are they in the *Nature of Suffering*; and**

**If they are in the *Nature of Suffering*, why are they in the *Nature of Suffering*?**

Remember the context: We were talking about using our intellectual capacity, logic as a tool for understanding things around us as an antidote to many of the different afflictions. Of course, one affliction that is prevalent is desire, desirous attachment; and it arises again and again. Usually, what we are attached to are samsaric phenomena.

And there's an innate sense that these phenomena can provide us with lasting happiness. It's a subtle type of mind; it is not that obvious. It's not like someone telling us: 'Oh, this car will give you lasting happiness.' Maybe they tell you that when you are buying a car. But basically, innately, there is a sense that if I just had that, then things would be all right. It takes awhile to recognize that. And not just to recognize it but also recognizing that the object, itself, is not able to do so. Why? Because it is in the *nature of suffering*.

This concept is not the same as understanding that our own mind and body is in the nature of suffering -- why? Because the:

- Causes that gave rise to this mind and body are afflictions and karma, and
- Potential for suffering to arise is ever present

Our mind and body are very fragile, so anything can happen at any time. It is almost like our mind and body are programmed to suffer. The way it is right now, the way it is composed as the result of afflictions and karma that we have accumulated in the past.

But Asanga says in a passage from the *Abhidharma Samuccya (Compendium of Knowledge)* that we depend upon, that we quote usually as a reliable source says in translation:

If someone were to ask, 'What is the truth of suffering?' The answer is:



***It should be known as sentient beings being born and the place where they are born, the environment they are born into.***

So it is not just sentient beings; but also the place where they are born.

These two lines respond to the question, 'What is the truth of suffering?' It refers to sentient beings and the environment they are born in. Both are said to be the truth of suffering.

Now, the last time we had this type of debate, people took the examples of mountains, cars and houses, and said, 'They are our objects of enjoyment, and they are said to be *in the nature of suffering* in the sense that they hold the potential for us to suffer.

That is different for a Buddha. A Buddha does not hold such a potential; Enlightenment does not hold such a potential.

*Eight Worldly Concerns*

It is not like we wake up in the morning, and we are terribly worried about not being Enlightened yet. Usually, we are worried about the external things. What are we concerned about? Material things, of course; friendships, our reputation, pleasure, being praised as opposed to being criticized -- what are called the *Eight Worldly Dharmas*. Trying to have pleasure and avoid unpleasant experiences; trying to have gain, and no loss; trying to have a good reputation and to not be disliked; and trying to be praised and not criticized.

So these eight are huge concerns to us and are called the *Eight Worldly Concerns*.

We are attached to the four positive ones; and have aversion to the others; or we are attached to the absence of the four negative ones.

***Why are Non-Sentient Phenomena in the Nature of Suffering?***

But, why do we say that *reputation* is in the nature of suffering? A good reputation or praise hasn't done anything; doesn't have a mind that has accumulated karma and afflictions in the past.

We can say that 'I am in the nature of suffering', because the causes that gave rise to this person now are contaminated; they are misperceptions, basically; they are wrong types of consciousness — all of the afflictions are not in accord with reality. They are something harmful; and they arose in our own continuum; and they created who we are right now. That makes sense. But why a car? Why a house? Why a mountain? What do you think?

STUDENT: Because of being impermanent. Are you saying, from their own side? Or are you saying that the way we see them or conceive of them is in the nature of suffering?

GESHE WANGMO: That is also true; but not just that — these objects, themselves, like Asanga said; also the environment is in the nature of suffering.

VEN. YONTEN: Because it creates attachment.

GESHE WANGMO: Because it creates attachment; okay. Because it creates attachment; all right. What did you want to say?

STUDENT: Well, I was going to say, I can't see how, from their own side, these things can be in the nature of suffering really.

GESHE WANGMO: I know; most people don't think that. Yes.

STUDENT: It is due to the relationship, surely, between the being and the environment phenomena.

GESHE WANGMO: This is definitely an important thought. But also, Jeff added something. He said, they lead to attachment. It is almost like, why do we blame them? Why do we blame the mountains if we are getting attached; and I think that has a little bit to do with what she is saying; right.

ELIZABETH: Because we grasp on it. Because some people have a reputation, like H.H. Dalai Lama, he doesn't decide he wants to be famous; you know. But he is able to deal with it; so it is not reputation that is problem. It is if you grasp on it or not.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay. Yes, Melissa.

MELISSA: I thought it was that they arose from karma and delusions, just like our own body and mind do.

GESHE WANGMO: What did Melissa just say? What are the mountains the result of? Who created the mountains by the way?

DORIS: Collective karma.

GESHE WANGMO: Collective karma, okay. This is not easy; trust me this is difficult. The mountains are the result of a collective karma. Yes, you wanted to say something, please.

STUDENT: Mountains and all entities don't exist until they are labelled.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay, so they don't exist as mountains until they are labelled. What he is basically presenting here is — you did, too — the **relationship between the mind and the object**.

I want to add something to make it a little bit more complicated. What about perceiving water? Does everyone perceive water? When I see water, what does another living being perceive, for example?

STUDENT: Drowning, the ability to drown in water.

GESHE WANGMO: Right, that is true. But here, we are talking about for example, preta beings. Preta beings or celestial beings.

VEN. YONTEN: Satisfying their thirst or they can't have enough of it.

GESHE WANGMO: Well, actually, they are said to perceive puss and blood. Where we perceive puss and blood, and celestial beings perceive some kind of nectar; whereas, for us it is just some kind of water.

What does that bring into the discussion?

STUDENT: Perception.

GESHE WANGMO: Absolutely, yes, perception. So the object, that which is observed, and the observer —

STUDENT: Valid cognizer.

GESHE WANGMO: Valid cognizers, yes, but what more?

STUDENT: Interact.

GESHE WANGMO: Interact. They are dependent upon one another. So the question, therefore: the table that I perceive and the table that Melissa perceives, really, what it comes down to is those are different tables. The table that Melissa perceives, the unique object, table, that she perceives and the table I perceive, they are unique. In other words, what she perceives, I don't perceive; and vice versa.

Is there a table that no one perceives?

STUDENT: No.

GESHE WANGMO: No, because we'd end up with an independent, objective reality, which is a problem. So when we talk ordinarily, how does reality appear to us? As if it objectively existed, totally independent of us. And when we talk about reality, we speak along those lines, even unintentionally. So when I speak about the mountains, the rivers, it seems to be some objective mountains and rivers that I objectively perceive, and they are just sitting out there, on their own, waiting to be revealed; waiting to reveal themselves to us as if that was reality. Actually, of course, they exist because we designate them. We impute them because we perceive them.

**Then if our mind is in the nature of suffering, the objects the mind perceives, shouldn't they also be in the nature of suffering?**

***Are Buddhas' Bodies Truths of Suffering?***

But there's a problem. What's the problem? Remember, last time, we discussed a specific object, I cited a specific object —

STUDENT: Bodhisattvas, Buddhas.

GESHE WANGMO: For example, Buddhas. We can perceive Buddhas; right. I guess if H.H. Dalai Lama is a Buddha, some of us or all of us can perceive His Holiness. Does that mean that His Holiness is a truth of suffering if he is a Buddha?

So that is a little difficult.

STUDENT: But his body would be though.

GESHE WANGMO: His body would be? Why would his body be a —

STUDENT: In order that we can perceive him.

GESHE WANGMO: Anything we perceive has to be a truth of suffering? For example, if you were to perceive your future cessations — you could perceive this inferentially, you could understand inferentially, that doesn't make it a truth of suffering.

ALAIN: Maybe that's not true of valid cognition?

GESHE WANGMO: Well, you can inferentially, validly realize —

ALAIN: Well, that's what books say.

GESHE WANGMO: Well, then we don't even know whether the Buddha exists, because that's what the books say. In the end, until we come to perception of that, we won't know. That is what the scriptures say: basically, we can inferentially know phenomena that are not truths of suffering.

It is a little difficult. You also find in the scriptures that —

ALAIN: Could you also say that anything you perceive with your senses —

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, but then there are phenomena that we don't perceive with our senses that are still truths of suffering.

ALAIN: Well, yeah. But anything you perceive with your senses would be a truth of suffering? That's a question.

GESHE WANGMO: But then the Buddha's body is said not to be a truth of suffering. Otherwise, you would end up: the Buddha's body that you perceive is a truth of suffering; but the Buddha's body that the Buddha perceives is not a truth of suffering. Hum. How many bodies does he have? He has many, but for one emanation, one particular emanation: everyone perceives it differently. So is there an emanation that is a truth of suffering and one that is not? Or do I have a body that is a truth of suffering and one that is not? The one that the Buddha perceives is not a truth of suffering, but the one that I perceive is. Do you see what I am saying?

I perceive objects, and because if I perceive them, they become truths of suffering. Does that mean if a Buddha perceives something, the object is not a truth of suffering?

The Buddha perceives my body. Is my body not a truth of suffering? Because my body that the Buddha perceives is not a truth of suffering? Are there two types?

*Not every Conventional Truth is a Truth of Suffering*

ALAIN: Isn't it that the truth of suffering is conventional truth?

GESHE WANGMO: That's true. A Buddha's mind is also a conventional truth.

ALAIN: Yeah, but the only way that a Buddha sees conventional truth is through sentient beings.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, so what?

ALAIN: So Buddha would be able to see the truth of suffering and all conventional truths.

GESHE WANGMO: But not every conventional truth is a truth of suffering; but every conventional truth is perceived through sentient beings; so that is not enough. It is a good thought.

*Nature & Purpose of Questioning in Debate*

The way this debate is done is to always find something to question. It is like a tool, so when you give an answer, I'll continue questioning. Oftentimes, we feel we understand something, but when we feel someone is questioning us, we feel, 'Oh, there's still room for deepening this understanding.'

Why do we want that? Because as you said last time, the way phenomena appear to us and the way that they actually exist don't match. Phenomena appear one way and they exist in a different way. Since, although we do perceive phenomena that do accord with reality, there is so much that we don't perceive, and there's so much that we perceive wrongly.

So to keep questioning, and in that way, we make our minds more flexible, our intelligence more flexible; and I keep challenging you. Asking you more questions, and I

tell you that it is much easier for me to debate than to answer. Especially, this particular point.

I had a talk with a friend of mind who was saying, it almost seems as though you can't really question the Buddha; right? It almost seems as though, when you first hear about this, and then you talk about Buddha and question these things, you feel, how can you actually question those things? There's a bit of a resistance there. We're not used to it; and we want an answer. We want it to be definitively this, that or the other. And certain things, they just take time and there's no answer yet. So bear with me. If we do this debate — and having been trained in this tradition where you debate all of the time, you become used to there not always being this, that or the other. It is a matter of opinion, basically.

Certain things are very clear: it's permanent or not. But other things are a little hazier. And if everything is merely imputed, it makes sense that is a matter of how you apply the terminology.

Was there anyone who had raised their hand?

STUDENT: I just wanted to check: did you say there are conventional truths that are not in the nature of suffering?

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, I did. There are conventional truths that are not in the nature of suffering. Like a Buddha: a Buddha is a conventional truth, but a Buddha is not in the nature of suffering.

But basically, despite all of this discussion we had — yes, Aidan.

Meaning of *In the Nature of Suffering*

AIDAN: What does 'in the nature of suffering' mean?

GESHE WANGMO: What does in the nature of suffering mean? We've basically said it to some degree. Something that is the result — pardon?

DORIS: Contaminated by karma.

GESHE WANGMO: Contaminated in the sense that it is the result of karma and afflictions.

AIDAN: Isn't there some kind of indication that it must be the cause of —

GESHE WANGMO: Hold, I wasn't done yet. Doris said 'the result of afflictions and karma'; but it also gives rise to other afflictions. So something that again will generate other afflictions.

AIDAN: You said, table is in the nature of suffering for me. Does Buddha perceive it in the nature of suffering?

GESHE WANGMO: Well, the Buddha perceives it as in the nature of suffering for you or for us.

AIDAN: So it is not in the nature of suffering from its own side; right?

GESHE WANGMO: **Nothing is in the nature of suffering from its own side. It is only in relation to something else.**

AIDAN: So the Buddha, from my perspective, is in the *nature of suffering*. As long as it is from my perspective, it is in the nature of suffering.



GESHE WANGMO: Well, the thing is that there is a table that the Buddha perceives, which is the table that Buddha perceives while at the same time perceiving the lack of inherent existence of it, which we cannot do. We cannot know the ultimate nature of the table and the table at the same time.

Basically, when the Buddha says that the *table is in the nature of suffering*, well, as we said before that *there is no objective table really* there. There is, for example, the table that Aidan perceives. So that table is in the *nature of suffering*, because in relationship it is a truth of suffering or it is a result of afflictions and karma.

AIDAN: But it cannot give rise to that suffering to the Buddha?

GESHE WANGMO: No.

AIDAN: That is part of being in the nature of suffering.

GESHE WANGMO: No, I didn't say that it has to give rise to suffering to everyone. It gives rise to suffering to Aidan; so therefore, it gives rise to suffering. If something gives rise to suffering to one being, it is *in the nature of suffering*; it doesn't have give rise to suffering to everyone; right. For one person, that's enough.

It is the result of your karma and afflictions. And really, it doesn't feel that way. It goes totally against our sense of what reality is, because we have a sense that there is a table over there that has got nothing to do with me. That's how it looks, how it appears.

### **Afflictions & Suffering**

Why did I say that? Last time, I said to make this idea practical in every day life, usually, when you feel unhappy, all we need to do is check what affliction is present. I'm 100% sure that there is an affliction somewhere present: aversion - we don't like someone; we feel resentful towards someone. Seeing this person makes us unhappy - obviously, there's an affliction of aversion, resentment. Then we are jealous; someone has something we don't have. What is jealousy? It is resentment — it is both attachment and aversion. Right?

What are we attached to? To that which we want. Say another person has a laptop we would like to have, or whatever you may become jealous of, a certain quality. We are attached to the quality and we have resentment towards the person for having that quality. There's attachment towards the object and resent towards the person who has it. That makes us feel terribly unhappy.

Attachment: we want something; we're attached to something. Why do we suffer? Because if we don't have it, then we suffer because we don't have it. And when we do have it, we suffer because we worry that we may lose it. Or we feel that one is not enough, we need two or more of it.

Anytime there is any sense of discomfort, there's definitely some affliction found one way or another and attachment is always there.

### **Root of Suffering & Four Attributes of Truth of Suffering**

That's why in the Theravada tradition the root of suffering is not so much described as being the misperception of reality but craving, which is just another word for attachment; attachment towards the self that is always present. My happiness, I, me



and mine - that is always present at the forefront. All of our actions are seen in relation to that self and influenced by that attachment.

As I said last time, when we remember, this is the truth of suffering? The truth of suffering has four attributes. What are they?

Impermanence, Suffering, Selflessness & Empty.

The Truth of Suffering has those four attributes. Empty and Selflessness are difficult to understand. Impermanence is also not easy to understand.

When we are attached, as a direct antidote think: "It is a truth of suffering." What am I attached to? "Oh, a truth of suffering."

That may be easier to understand than Emptiness and Selflessness. I am just saying, understanding of reality — not something as difficult as impermanence or as difficult as selflessness, just understanding how the things that we experience are in the nature of suffering. If we have some sense that we went through today, I think that may be easier to apprehend than selflessness. Even impermanence may not directly help us to understand. If you have this changing, 'So what. I still want it.' Right?

Even having a coarse sense of impermanence. I'm still so attached to that person, even though they have a beard after three days; so still the attachment may not really diminish because we haven't understood impermanence on a deeper level. But understanding it is in the nature of suffering.

Anyway, it came up last time, and I thought that although it is not really what we are addressing here, I thought it was important to remind ourselves that when we talk about using wisdom, we want to use the wisdom realizing selflessness, impermanence, or emptiness. But we don't think about phenomena being in the nature of suffering; or maybe some of you do; but just to remind you.

## **REVIEW - BUDDHIST VIEWS REGARDING A CREATOR GOD**

Now, getting back to our discussion from last time with respect to a big discussion in this text: what is a Creator God; is there a Creator God or not. This is seen as important, even though we are Buddhist, having been brought up in a Judeo-Christian culture, there may still be some sense remaining that there is something there that can save me; or because we relate to Buddha in the same way that we would usually relate to a God.

***One is One's Own Protector; Enemy & Witness.***

For those of you who were not here before: Of course, this refutation with regard to God is not addressed towards non-Buddhist because there's no need. However, as the Buddha, himself, says:

***One is One's own Protector. One is one's own Enemy.***

With regard to negative and positive actions,

***One is one's own Witness.***

So it comes down to the idea of karma, of course. We are our own protector. We can actually protect ourselves from suffering. We can overcome suffering only by engaging in the right kind of actions. We are our own enemy in the end. We always see our

enemies as outside of ourselves; we are really our own enemy — our afflictions, in other words, are our own enemy.

And with regard to positive and negative actions, we are our own Witness. We know our own negative actions; and, if we are honest, we are the ones who know ourselves best. Of course, there are the great Lamas who also, because of their insight, their clairvoyances, they may be clairvoyant, they may be able to perceive our qualities, but in the end, except for those, no one else knows better than us.

VEN. YONTEN: When the Buddha says, 'One is one's own Witness', and you said, basically, we know when we've done something wrong or right, what happens if someone's sense of morality is very different from yours or mine. They might think that there's nothing wrong with stealing something worth 1,000 rupees or sexual misconduct with someone else's spouse, etc., and they have a different sense of morality than we do, how can they be their own witness?

GESHE WANGMO: They still know what they are doing; they are still aware of that.

VEN. YONTEN: Their awareness is that there is nothing wrong with it. I'm assuming that there are people like that; I don't know.

GESHE WANGMO: I'm not sure whether it's like, 'There's nothing wrong with it. I want to do it. There's nothing wrong with it.' I'm not sure. But okay, yeah, there may be definitely cases where you think this acceptable.

VEN. YONTEN: Sexual morality in the United States, for example.

GESHE WANGMO: I mean, you still know what you are doing, I suppose. And secondly, it is because of misperceptions that we don't perceive correctly.

What is very interesting, what we need to understand is that we don't just have one awareness. We possess many types of consciousness. And when an affliction is present, it is a wrong consciousness that never sees reality. But there are also other awarenesses that arise at differing times that see things differently, so I can imagine that there are people who do not think that their behavior is wrong at all; but sometimes, there are situations where, I know in my own case when there's anger, it feels okay to do what I do when I do it; and in that moment it feels right. And then ten minutes later, I think, 'Oh, dear' because then the anger is gone and another awareness arises.

There is this constant back and forth of different types of awarenesses. Some are more in accord with reality; some less; right. We keep changing, too. But in some cases, there is no understanding; there is basically narrow-mindedness. For me, this is good; it makes me feel good. I get short term happiness, therefore, it is good. Not considering the other person; not considering long-term consequences.

But what it is saying here is that we have the potential to know. Sometimes, we don't, we can't; the afflictions are so strong; and there's no other awareness that may see the situation for what it is; and therefore, it is not saying that we are always, in all situations, our witness; but we have that potential to be our own witness.

VEN. YONTEN: Thank you.

GESHE WANGMO: To return to this idea of a creator God. How do we relate to such a being; is this relevant to us? Although usually in Buddhist scriptures, there's not much

mentioned about that. It is only in the context of the *Pramanavarttika* that a large section is dedicated to examining the idea of God. But in doing so, the *Pramanavarttika* addresses a lot of other issues.

### **Does a Living God who is Responsible for our Happiness & Suffering Exist?**

Is God permanent or impermanent? Is there such an entity? Is there a living being that is responsible for our happiness and our suffering?

This is interesting. It seems that something is innate with in us as human beings, a human feature that is a sense that there is something greater than ourselves that must have created reality. I was wondering, why do we have that sense? What is there such an innate sense that there must be a Creator? I guess it is because there is such beauty around us that, unless someone created it, we wonder, where does this beauty come from? Then what about ugly things? And beauty is totally relative anyway. I think it's beautiful; someone else may not even think so. But there's this feeling, 'Oh, this is such a beautiful mountain, God must have created it.' Though beauty is just what I call it; but that's a different aspect.

The idea is whether or not this is something just natural to humans? I believe that it is. The other day I was watching a documentary about a very ancient tribe in Ecuador, one of the tribes that lived in the Amazon. It started with an old man telling the story of our creation. How this being created us. Even in these ancient tribes that were not influenced, I suppose, by other cultures, or maybe they were — we don't know. It seemed as though they had been living on their own for, I don't know how many generations, and still had this idea of there being a Creator.

Also, I was thinking, because we were created by our parents, so there's a sense that there must be some entity that also created everything.

I like to ask these questions because we're human; we naturally have those tendencies to see that there must be something greater. And to recognize these misperceptions; that's one way of becoming aware of them.

### **Can God be Permanent & Self-Arisen?**

But then analyzing whether or not God is permanent is also important, of course, because we have a natural sense of permanence. We even perceive ourselves as permanent. There is a sense we're permanent, we only change every ten years or so, or once a year; there's definitely not a sense that we change all of the time.

So not surprisingly, that we have a sense that a Creator God is permanent. So the ideas of Self-Arisen or Permanent are very important.

**Permanent** means not changing moment-by-moment.

**Self-Arisen** means that it does not depend upon on anything but itself.

How could God depend upon anything but himself?

### **Can Any Phenomena Exist Independently?**

Someone asked the question: What about the mind? Does that mean that the mind is Self-Arisen? Someone asked that question because Mind has existed since beginningless time.

God is Self-Arisen because God does not depend upon anything but himself and has existed since beginningless time. Is that possible for any phenomena?

Do we ever have a sense that we are totally independent of others? And if so, which affliction is reflected in that? Can you think of an affliction where there's a sense that, 'It was only me, and no one else, that was responsible for something'; and therefore, an affliction arises.

STUDENT: Paranoia.

GESHE WANGMO: Paranoia, okay. It was only me; yes, you are right. But what else?

DORIS: Attachment to the self.

GESHE WANGMO: Attachment to the self; okay. I'm thinking of another one, but —

STUDENT: Pride.

GESHE WANGMO: That's it, pride and arrogance. Pride is sometimes used in a positive sense, like Divine Pride. But actually, pride is also arrogance. It is like, if I have a quality, how many people were involved in producing that quality? My parents, teachers, the list is endless. And I also made a contribution, but that's just one person. I should be proud of all of them. Oh, these teachers; those parents — but usually, it's like, 'I'. It is a very interesting when we feel proud. It is wonderful when we have arrogance, because it is such a good opportunity to check it; right. When there's arrogance. 'Oh, okay, there's arrogance. Let's leave it there for a moment and investigate it.'

What is the perception by that arrogance? It seems to perceive that I am the only one that can take credit for that. It's a bit like it is Self-Arisen. It has nothing to do with anyone else; it is just me. This quality is me, number one. It's not like it's one of my qualities, next to all of my faults. No, in that moment, it feels like my quality and I are like the same. I don't have any faults that I'm going to take into consideration at that moment; plus, it's totally independent of anyone else.

To me that is a bit of an innate sense, a misperceived sense of Self-Arisen-ness. Is that actually possible? That is the question raised by someone who asked: What about the mind? The mind is preceded by a prior mind since beginningless time. Is, therefore, the mind Self-Arisen in the way that God may be perceived.

And that is the idea of an entity that is totally — I cannot influence, change God. OMG, who am I? God being *self-arisen* means being totally uninfluenced by something else.

VEN. YONTEN: But that goes right back to the words of the Buddha: You are your own Savior . . .

GESHE WANGMO: You are right. First we are trying to understand this wrong view; so we are just establishing it here. And then we negate it. You're absolutely right, we did that in a coarse fashion before by citing that; but now I am presenting the reasoning here.

### Can a Creator God be Permanent?

[Track 2] Now, what was the reason given in the text? God cannot be permanent. Why? Why is God not permanent? What was the reason given in here? I'm just going to check what was said last time.

ALAIN: Something permanent can't be . . .

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, that was the second reason; you are absolutely right. But what was the first reason?

**A God that is Permanent could not perceive things.**

— is aware of perceiving impermanent phenomena.

GESHE WANGMO: So if God is aware of impermanent phenomena, which change moment-by-moment, the perceiver — because the perceiver and that which is perceived are dependent upon one another. Consciousness or perception, a perceiver is an agent; it has an object. If the object changes, the perceiver changes. So you see this relationship is also - by looking at this, we get a sense of that relationship. The mind is defined by its object; right. A mind that perceives, *e.g.*, a snake slithering this way and that way. When it goes this way, there's a mind that perceives a snake going this way. When the snake moves that way and it's perceived, then there's a mind that perceives a snake going that way. The mind changes. It is no longer a mind that perceives the snake going this way; now it is a mind perceiving the snake going that way. So, obviously it has to change. Jumping back and forth; or anything that changes. If you watch a car or something moving, the mind changes, because you can't see those as independent. So it gives us an understanding of how mind works.

If there is a God that is permanent, then that God could not perceive things.

**What if God was Permanent but God's Mind is Impermanent?**

Then someone argues: God is permanent; but God's mind is impermanent. What is the relationship between God and his mind? What is our relationship — this is a question we should ask ourselves: What is the relationship between me and my mind? That is a question to reflect upon.

The idea that God is permanent and God's mind is impermanent — this is what Alain was speaking about.

**Can a permanent God create Sequentially over Time?**

What do we say God is? God is the Creator of everything. If God is the Creator of everything, God must have created his own mind; right. God created his own mind. If the mind is created by God, and the first moment of the mind is different from the second moment and the second moment is different from the third moment. Just have the picture in your mind of that chain of moments — first moment, second moment, third moment — but God is permanent: that is impossible. Because there is God that creates the first moment; and God that creates the second moment. The first and second moments of consciousness: are they created simultaneously? Or in sequence?

In sequence, because they arise in sequence, so the consciousness is created in sequence: first the first moment of consciousness; then the second. So the creator of the first moment of consciousness does not create the second moment of consciousness. If he did, the first moment and the second moment would have to arise simultaneously; right? If at the same time that the first moment is created, the second moment is also created, they must arise at the same time, because they've both been created. But since the moments of consciousness arise in sequence — right — one after the other, that which creates it is able to create the first moment but not yet the second moment; and

then a moment later, God is able to create the second moment, but not the third moment. So if that which is created is created in sequence, the Creator has to also be different moment-by-moment, because what is created changes. Does that make sense?

If God would create everything simultaneously, everything would have to arise simultaneously. If God were permanent, and did not change moment-by-moment, and had created me from my birth till now, then the my five year old self, my ten year old self, would have to arise at the same time; because God is permanent and created me and never changed.

Does that logic make sense? You have to say everything about God is permanent, or you have to say consciousness, etc., are impermanent.

STUDENT: I missed the last sentence about your being five years old and ten years old.

GESHE WANGMO: Let's say you have a ten year old child. God created this 10 year old child, but God didn't create just the 10 year old child, God created the new born child, the one year old child, the two year old child; all the way until 10 years old. If God were permanent, then he would have had to create the child simultaneously. The one year old, the two year old, the three year old, until the 10 year old; because if God is permanent, there's no difference between an earlier God and a later God. God always remains the same. And if God always remains the same, then there is no time when God creates a one year old child, but not a two year old child.

If there is a time when God created a one year old child, and then a two year old child, etc., then God has changed; because the God that created the one year old child has not created the two year old child yet. There is a time when God is different from the God that created the two year old child.

Am I making sense?

STUDENT: Thank you.

GESHE WANGMO: Or is like God created the child, and then the child just grew on its own? Well, then God is not really, it's almost like, 'Yeah, God gave rise to us but then just let's us be.' And God cannot give us happiness. Then why do we pray to God? Because God is no longer involved.

AIDAN: That's not what all Christians believe.

GESHE WANGMO: Not all Christians believe —

AIDAN: I think in general, Christians believe that God created people and then it's up to people ...

GESHE WANGMO: God cannot give us happiness? Cannot give us this, that and the other?

AIDAN: ...

VEN. YANGCHEN: ...

GESHE WANGMO: Okay. That's totally right; you bring in the idea of free will. If everything is created by God, where do you draw the line? How much does God create; and how much not? Has God created the environment around us? We'd have to say, yes; right? The inanimate environment; absolutely. Is God responsible for earthquakes? Hum? He has created the mountains and the earth, and then they just shake on their own. Or did God create the earthquake.



VEN. YONTEN: If you believe the Fundamentalist Christians, God does the earthquakes.

GESHE WANGMO: Right, God does the earthquakes.

VEN. YONTEN: Fires, and everything.

GESHE WANGMO: And everything, also, my thoughts.

VEN. YONTEN: That's not free will anymore.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, but the Fundamentalist would they — I don't know. We're not trying to refute this system and not that system. We're trying to address ideas that we naturally — even ourselves — carry within ourselves. OMG, so many hands went up at once. I don't know who was first.

ELIZABETH: I am still questioning this notion of time in terms of sequential linearity. Because I'm not good in physics, but I have heard that in physics, sometimes, time is perceived as space. So then there is no more sequence and linearity. So I don't know; I cannot think about —

GESHE WANGMO: I don't know what physics says time is. I'm talking about the idea of time as presented in Buddhism. Time is a relative phenomenon. Just because we use the same word, I am not sure that physics is talking about the same thing. So, I can't talk about physics; I don't know.

But in Buddhism, time is imputed on the basis of phenomena changing. The one year old Elizabeth, the two year old Elizabeth, three year old Elizabeth. In relation to the three year old Elizabeth, the one year old Elizabeth is past. In relationship to two year old Elizabeth, three year old Elizabeth is future; one year old Elizabeth is past; two year old Elizabeth is present. That's time; nothing more or less.

Time only exists in the relation to impermanent phenomena. Since one year old Elizabeth, three year old Elizabeth and two year old Elizabeth are not the same, we can say that in relation to one of those, past, present, future.

### **Three Times exist Simultaneously; but the Past, Present & Future of something are Different**

But past, present and future are actually synonymous — to add a complication.

AIDAN: You're saying that they all exist at the same time?

GESHE WANGMO: They exist at the same time.

AIDAN: Why can't God create them all at the same time? That was your refutation earlier.

GESHE WANGMO: No, my refutation — I didn't say that. I never said the three times are not synonymous. I said the first moment of Aidan, the second moment of Aidan, the third moment of Aidan — they are not synonymous. I never said that the first moment of Elizabeth, the one year old Elizabeth, the two year old Elizabeth and the three year old Elizabeth — they are not synonymous.

The three times are synonymous, but the past in relation to one thing, and the future in relation to the same thing are not synonymous.



An easy example: short and long are synonymous. Short and long are equivalent. Is this short? Is this a short piece of paper? Yes, in relation to this piece of paper, it is. Is this a long piece of paper. Yes, in relation to this, it is a long piece of paper. So in relation to something else, it is long. In relation to something else it is short. It is long or short? It is both; right.

But is this paper long in relation to this? No, it is only short in relation to this. In relation to this object, this can never be long. This paper being long in relation to this object is not both long and short. It is long in relation to this; and short in relation to something else.

That is what we are saying here. **The three times exist simultaneously; but the past of something, the present of something — those are different.**

In relation to one year old Elizabeth and three year old Elizabeth, two year old Elizabeth — in relation to those two — is the present; in between. If that were now, then there is the future and the past. If now, there is two year old Elizabeth, we can talk about her as the present, three year old as the future; and one year old as the past; and they are not simultaneous. And God created those three in sequence, so when God created the one year old Elizabeth, he did not create the two year old Elizabeth and the three year old Elizabeth. If that is the view here.

But definitely the consciousness of God, even if God did not create one year old and two year old and three year old Elizabeth; but his consciousness — we're still talking about his consciousness. Maybe you would say that just arose naturally, and God had nothing to do with it; he kind of allowed it to arise and then it just went from there. And then it is very hard: how much does God create and how much does God not create?

Is God responsible for the changes within the mountains that we are not responsible for; or does that just happen naturally? And whatever gave rise to the mountain — maybe the mountain arose naturally; because whatever was the substantial cause of the mountain gave rise to it. So we can't even say that God created the mountain because they arose naturally. It is very difficult to say what God did and did not create.

What about this earth? God created this earth? No, no, it was the material that came together that naturally arose; or was God responsible for bringing this material together? Well, then he was responsible for the food that Elizabeth got to eat; for the thoughts that she didn't commit suicide at the age of two — sorry. Responsible for all of the causes and conditions coming together so that Elizabeth is still alive.

We don't really think about this so much: but if we say that something created something, then where do we draw the line?

### **Distinguishing the Law of Cause & Effect and the Law of Karma**

AIDAN: In Buddhism, some people say that everything is cause and effect.

GESHE WANGMO: It's not true that people say that everything is cause and effect.

AIDAN: Some people say that.

GESHE WANGMO: Who says that?

AIDAN: I've heard people say that. In this school they never say that; but I've heard some people say that.

GESHE WANGMO: No, because there are permanent things that are not dependent upon causes.

AIDAN: Okay. Things like hard things, . . . they are not necessarily . . .

GESHE WANGMO: It depends, you see: one explanation is that the law of cause and effect and the law of karma are different. The law of karma is a law of cause and effect; but whatever is the law of cause and effect is not a law of karma. For example, a growing flower, the fact that the flower grows without someone planting its seed, or cultivating it, it just grows somewhere in the forest, the fact that the flower grows from a seed is the law of cause and effect. It is because of a law of cause and effect that when the conditions come together, the flower arises. This is an example of the law of cause and effect that is not the law of Karma.

Usually, we say that experiences we have — feelings of happiness or unhappiness — they are the result of karma; okay. Then you are saying, what about mountains? Experiences that I have, they are the result of karma, so that when I feel happy that is the result of a previous karma; when I feel unhappy this is the result of negative karma; and when I feel neither happy nor unhappy, that is the result of neutral karma.

Now are the mountains also the result of karma? Is there are contradiction?

Are there any objective, independent mountains? It goes back to that question. When Aidan asked, it is just our experience of something? I think that was the point you made. It's only our personal experience that is the result of karma. What about the mountains? They are not the result of our personal experience?

Well, there are mountains that I experience, and every time I experience them, there is either a positive negative or neutral feeling. You can never separate any experience we have, whatever we experience — there's either a feeling of happiness, of unhappiness - like an unpleasant feeling. So whether I have a pleasant feeling, an unpleasant feeling or neither (which is called a neutral feeling), there's always a feeling. Even right now as I'm talking to you, there are moments when I am happy, or have feelings of pleasure, moments of displeasure and moments of neutrality — they keep changing all of the time.

It has to do with my perception of things. Each moment, we perceive something and there's a feeling. And that feeling is seen as the direct result of an action in the past.

If there's no objective world out there, I perceive a mountain, then my perception of that mountain and the feeling that comes along with it is the result of karma.

That is why we say the mountain is created by my karma — the mountain that I perceive is the result of my karma; and the mountain that you perceive is the result of your karma.

Is there an objective mountain? No.

So we say that mountain is the result of karma. When we say mountain, is there kind of a mountain — we talk along these lines. We can say, 'table' as if there were some kind of over-arching table. Is there some generality, some over-arching table? Is there really some table like that? No, there isn't.

We talk about it; we can use it as — but there's no over-arching table. When I say, there's a table like that, in the end it is a specific table that I am talking about.

Buddhists go further. They say, 'In the end, it is the table that Sam perceives; and the table that I perceive.' And even though we would say, 'It is the same table,' it isn't the same table; right? We say it is the same table. Of course, we say that in order to differentiate this table from that table. Are you seeing the same table that I do? 'Yes, it is this one.' In order not to get confused with this table. But actually the table that you perceive and the table that I perceive are not the same.

Therefore, I think this can be explained. The experiences we have are the result of our karma. Let's say there is an earthquake now; right. Each and everyone would experience that earthquake differently. I may be trapped for ten days in a building, and you may be walking on the street and go, 'Was there an earthquake; I didn't even notice.'

ALAIN: I was just wondering: earlier you quoted two lines that the environment you are born into is in the nature of suffering. And [*unintelligible*] kind of said, 'Yes, because it was created by contaminated karma. I took that to mean that physical matter, also, was created by contaminated nature; and this universe physically.'

GESHE WANGMO: Is there an objective universe?

ALAIN: I mean, not an objective universe.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay, then. A non-objective universe — your universe; my universe. The universe you perceive was created was created by your karma; the universe I perceive was created by my karma?

### **Collective Karma & Creation of the Environmental Universe**

ALAIN: No, collective karma.

GESHE WANGMO: Collective karma. What does collective karma mean?

This takes me to this idea we that we have collective karma. What is a collective result of a karma?

When we speak of collective karma, collective karma is the cause. There is a karma we collectively produce; and then we have a collective me an example of that?

ALAIN: Everybody being in an earthquake.

GESHE WANGMO: Very good. Why is that a collective karmic result?

ALAIN: Because they all experience the earthquake.

GESHE WANGMO: Oh, we all experience the earthquake at the same time or, I guess, at a kind of similar time.

Do we all experience it the same? No, individually, quite differently. Nevertheless, we experience an earthquake. So in relation to that, relative to the fact that we all experience an earthquake in Dharamsala, in relation to that we say, we have collective karma. We have a collective karma to be human, because we all have the experience of being human at the same time. We experience a collective karma to be in this room right now, because we are all in this room right now.

It is not like we experience collective karmas all of the time. With ever human being, we have the collective karma. With every human being we have created the same cause to

be human right now; right? With every human being alive right now, we have a collective karma. So, yes; okay. So what?

Therefore, with the mountain, it is the result of a collective karma of those beings who perceive the mountain; because we have come to the conclusion that a mountain cannot exist without someone perceiving it. It exists because someone perceives it. If there were no one to perceive it, it would not exist.

So the fact that we perceive it, that's our karma. And whoever perceives the mountain, all of those are responsible for its existence.

Sounds very much like the Mind Only school — but it is not the Mind Only school, because conventionally, there is an external mountain.

VEN. KHUNPHEN: So why are we making a difference between cause and effect and karma? Why isn't karma just a sub-division —

GESHE WANGMO: Good question.

VEN. KHUNPHEN: — if everything is karma in the end?

GESHE WANGMO: No, not everything is karma.

VEN. KHUNPHEN: Didn't we just establish that everything is karma?

GESHE WANGMO: No. The fact that things change moment by moment is not your karma; it's not my karma. It just happens.

The fact that karma, itself, is not my karma or your karma. Karma, itself, the fact that from positive actions something positive comes about; the fact that from something from negative or harmful actions leads to negative experience is neither your karma nor my karma.

AIDAN: The collective karma of sentient beings?

GESHE WANGMO: No, it's not a karma. It just is. The fact that you have a mind. It makes logical sense; doesn't it? It just is; it just always happens.

ALAIN: That's what they say in Christianity. It just is.

GESHE WANGMO: No, I didn't say, 'it just is' in the sense of giving a reason. It is just the nature of something. It has nothing to do with karma having created it as such; right?

With the mountains, etc., there was a time when they were not there. Then they came into existence. So that is said to be a karma that is created; something that was not there before then came into existence in a very way. But these are just facts that are always there. That's what I meant; 'just is' doesn't mean that I'm saying there is no reason for it; just that it is always there.

STUDENT: So there is a creator in Buddhism; it is karma?

GESHE WANGMO: Yes. Yes, there is a creator in Buddhism: that's karma. Exactly. But it is not a living being; and it is not one karma: it is yours and mine. My karma creates my experiences. Your karma creates your experiences. It is not an over-arching being that needs to be worshiped and —

AIDAN: Karma didn't create karma; right?

GESHE WANGMO: No. Karma didn't create karma. Karma is not a result, not a karmic result. Yes.

AIDAN: So karma is a creator in one sense; but since it didn't create karma, it didn't create anything; so there's another creator.

GESHE WANGMO: Huh?

AIDAN: That created the karma; right?

GESHE WANGMO: What are you saying? Every moment of karma is created by its previous moment; right.

AIDAN: You're saying, the karma of —

GESHE WANGMO: Karma is not a karmic result. Karma was created by a former moment of karma.

AIDAN: Mere karma; like gravity from a physics point of your.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes. It's like a natural law.

AIDAN: Nothing made it whatever . . . and the same way for us.

GESHE WANGMO: Mind, for example, is similar.

AIDAN: Yeah, so karma is like that. It's a natural law.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, and mind, itself, has always been there.

AIDAN: It's always been there. And nobody created it.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes. No entity, no living being created.

AIDAN: Then when we say that karma created the physical universe, our experience —

GESHE WANGMO: We talk along those lines. It is just saying karma created as though there were some over-arching. If you get down to the nitty gritty details, you can't say I see a table right now. This is what you are doing right now. You're saying, 'Oh, I see a table,' but actually, I don't see this over-arching table.'

I run out of words. When I say, Karma created the universe; I am saying your karma and everyone's karma created what we now call the universe; what you perceive, and what I perceive; right?

ALAIN: So the basis upon which we impute the universe?

GESHE WANGMO: The basis upon which we impute the universe; what do you mean?

ALAIN: Well, you impute the universe on some basis.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, which is also being imputed by the way.

ALAIN: Yeah, yeah. I mean —

GESHE WANGMO: It is merely imputed; so?

ALAIN: Its basis upon whatever we impute, is that created by collective karma? For example, this planet.

GESHE WANGMO: This planet: was it created by karma? Yes.

ALAIN: Collective karma?

GESHE WANGMO: By the collective karma of the beings who reside on it. Is it merely imputed? Yes. So what is your question?

ALAIN: That was my question.

GESHE WANGMO: What was your question?

ALAIN: My question was: is the basis upon which we impute this planet, Earth, created by collective karma?

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, but the basis is also imputed.

ALAIN: Yeah, yeah. In the end there's nothing —

GESHE WANGMO: "In the end there's nothing" — no, no, no. That's nihilism. I'm just kidding.

Let's leave it at that. We've spent a lot of time discussing this. As I said, there are not correct or incorrect answers; just the fact that we give it some thought. We think about these very difficult ideas. We can see it seems contradictory here. Why is there this contradiction, because it appears one way, but through logical reasoning, it doesn't make sense that it exists in that way.

So we speak about karma. Karma appears to be some kind of external force; of course, there isn't. Did you raise your hand?

STUDENT: I was wondering about making a refutation. First of all, what does it take to make a refutation? I understand that in order to refute something, you have to define it properly.

GESHE WANGMO: Oh, yes. Yes, you are right.

STUDENT: So in that context, I wouldn't know precisely why we are refuting this permanence, internally . . .

GESHE WANGMO: You are right.

STUDENT: And another thing is where the mind of God is changing, but God, itself, is not changing. We are saying that there are two isolates: that the mind of God is one thing and God is another . . .

GESHE WANGMO: Okay. So number one, what are we refuting. I said that two classes ago, that there was this idea in India, for example, of the Brahma and Vedanta schools. How did this idea of God come together, into existence as one entity? From what I read, first of all, there were specific natural forces that they worshipped. Slowly, over time, these natural forces that had created this universe become one person, one being, one entity that was worshipped as God.

Of course, it is impossible, really to say one definition of God that is true for everyone, because if you talk to 10 Christians, 10 Muslims, 10 Jews, or 10 Hindus following a creator God, everyone has a slightly different idea. So it is very difficult. It is the same when we talk about table: what do you think a table is; what I think; they can be very different. But there are some general qualities.



A creator: being omnipotent, a being that has the power to create things — whether it chooses to do so or not is a different matter — but who has definitely created certain things. And I am saying, “who”, because some may say it is not a being; it is just some force or something. But the sense that this God is worshipped; there’s a personal relationship. We don’t have personal relationships with tables, with forces; right. Like gravity: I love my gravity; oh, please help me. No, no.

We may say it is a force, but the way we relate to is as a being of love. How much love does a table have? Or a force. We associate it with a loving being, a kind being, a just being, an omnipotent. It’s a being. Right, in the end, we relate to it; we want there to be something. When we feel lonely, we don’t want a force to console us; we want someone to be there.

It is just a psychological need we have for this over-arching being that gives us loves us unconditionally, even though we think we suck and we feel that everyone else feels the same about us; right. It speaks to some need that we have.

This is how I see it here.

I in my mind, you in your mind, are they different; or are they the same?

Student: Different.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay, they are different. Totally unrelated?

Student: No.

GESHE WANGMO: No, because if your mind changes, you change. If you change, well, your mind is likely to change, too; right. So they are closely connected but they are not the same, because you wouldn’t speak of *my* mind, if you and your mind were the same.

So we differentiate between God, the creator, and the mind. Does that make sense? It is an important question: what do we mean, God and this mind. How do those relate? Do we ever ask ourselves, ‘What is the difference between me and my mind’?

### TEXT REVIEW: **Refuting [the Idea that a Creator God] is Permanent**

[Track 3] We’ve basically concluded reviewing discussions from the text (that were addressed in the prior terms).

I just want to read the verses from very end of the section of the text entitled, **Refuting [the Idea that a Creator God] is Permanent**. We basically examined this last year. I am going to go through it again to remind those of you who were here last years; and for those of you who were not, to get a sense of the presentation. Because to just start in the middle of it wouldn’t really work.

In brief, God is not a permanent *valid cognizer being*,

“A *valid cognizer being*” means an omniscient being. From the Buddhist point of view, an omniscient being and a *valid cognizer being* are the same. From the point of view of those believing God, omniscience, *valid cognizer being* and omnipotent are the same. So:

In brief, God is not a permanent *valid cognizer being*, because he realizes functioning things.

*Functioning things* means changing things.



Since functioning things change moment by moment, the person or awareness that perceives these things also has to change moment by moment.

So we say, 'I perceive these things, because my awareness perceives those things.' I perceive these around me; my awareness perceives things around me. I have to change and my mind has to change, because both perceive changing things. Does that make sense?

They change moment-by-moment, so the perceiver has to change moment by moment.

Therefore, owing to objects of knowledge being impermanent, a *valid cognizer being* cannot be fixed or permanent.

"Fixed" as in "fixed in time", like unchanging or permanent. This is what Dharmakirti says here:

*("There is no permanent pramana / . . .*

No permanent *valid cognizer*.

*. . . Because pramana [valid cognizer or valid cognizer being] realizes existent things and / Because owing to impermanent objects of knowledge / That [pramana] is not fixed.")*

Right. What Dharmakirti says makes sense.

Nor is it feasible to assert that God's consciousnesses are impermanent while God is permanent, because God's earlier and later consciousnesses are generated sequentially, . . .

And God created those.

. . . and something that is generated in sequence cannot be generated by a permanent phenomenon.<sup>3</sup>

Yes.

STUDENT: Well, that . . . problem with because how God is posited by Christians . . . self-confirming; and I can relate also to how our mind and our body work, but the causes and conditions that make our mind impermanent are not necessarily the same as those that make our body impermanent. The body and mind are, of course related, but is it necessarily that this mind is changing that makes this body change or . . .

GESHE WANGMO: So what is his question? If the mind changes, does God have to change? Right? Did God create his own mind? Who created God's mind if God didn't create it? If God didn't, it was just there? Or —

STUDENT: It's self-arisen.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay. If it's self-arisen, self-arisen means self — what does self mean? By God. When we say that God is self-arisen, it was only God that itself created itself. Or are you saying someone else created God.

STUDENT: No.

---

<sup>3</sup> The paragraph in the text concludes: (*"Because it is not feasible that those generated in sequence / Are generated by a permanent [phenomenon]"*)

GESHE WANGMO: No, right. So we talk about God existing before and existing now; so the one that exists now was created by the one before. When we say *permanent* — here, we are saying that God is the creator of everything; right? So then, definitely, of his own consciousness. If God created my consciousness, then God created his own consciousness. So God created his own consciousness.

So if God created his own consciousness, he created the second moment of consciousness and the third moment of consciousness, since he created the first moment; right.

So is the third moment of consciousness the same as the second moment of consciousness?

No.

Do they arise at the same time?

No. So the God who created the first moment and who created the second moment is not the same. So God has changed.

STUDENT: Why not? Why is not the same God?

GESHE WANGMO: Because there is the creator of the first moment of consciousness; and the creator of the second moment of consciousness. Since they are not the same; they are different. Since they are different, there is a difference from the former to the latter. So that means change.

VEN. YONTEN: In the same way that Jeff two days is not the same as Jeff today?

GESHE WANGMO: That means change in a continuum. When we say *change*, what does that actually mean? It's a word we apply to something when a former moment of it is not the same as a later moment; but it is a continuum. Then we say *change*.

So if yesterday's Jeff did something that today's Jeff doesn't do, there is a difference between yesterday's Jeff and today's Jeff, so Jeff has changed from yesterday to today.

If a God that creates the first moment does not create the second moment, and the God that creates the second moment and not the first moment, and they exist at different times, then *change*. That alone makes it impermanent.

That is what impermanence means; it means that there is a former moment and a latter moment of some thing; right, of that thing. I'm not saying that Melissa's former moment and my latter moment. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the same phenomenon, a former moment and a latter moment. If they are not the same — because what they gave rise to is not the same — then they have changed. They have created something. Just the fact that they created something. And they are not the same moment-by-moment, and then they have changed.

Am I making sense? I mean just the creation part, that in itself, there is some dynamic in creation. What does creation actually mean? It is something dynamic; right. A cause in itself is also an effect. But in relation to something that comes later, the Tibetan uses a word that means *benefitting*:

A cause is described as *benefitting* - *pen chey* [ཕན་ཅེད་] - *pen* [ཕན་] means to *benefit*; *chey* [ཅེད་] means to *do*.

So something benefits something else. It benefits something by way of contributing to its existence; it benefits it that way. Yes.

STUDENT: What if God created a thing with the ability to change, and he does the first moment and then the thing —

GESHE WANGMO: It just rolls.

STUDENT: — with the ability to change.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes. That's the idea we discussed previously: God created us, the first moment, and then he just lets it roll. And then just free will.

STUDENT: Yes. The mountain is changing.

GESHE WANGMO: If you have that assertion, then God doesn't create his own consciousness. I don't create my own mind; right? Basically, then God doesn't have an influence on his own mind. Or yes? Right.

You see, you are right to say: well, what are we actually addressing here? We are just addressing different views that we all hold. Some of the reasonings may apply to some who hold certain views and some may not. But the presentation is trying to be thorough. Because the next thing we look at is an *impermanent* God: is that possible or not? And I am not sure that the explanation given here is so satisfactory; let's see.

There is one last part here:

Similarly, it is not correct to hold . . .

Sorry, here it is saying:

Nor is it feasible to assert that God's consciousnesses are impermanent . . .

This page 94, you have this kind of summary at the end of page 94.

Nor is it feasible to assert that God's consciousnesses are impermanent while God is permanent, because God's earlier and later consciousnesses are generated sequentially, and something that is generated in sequence cannot be generated by a permanent phenomenon.

And here, Dharmakirti says:

*"Because it is not feasible that those generated in sequence / Are generated by a permanent [phenomenon]"*

### **An Unchanging God cannot depend on "other conditions"**

Now, the last thing in this section summary. It is another kind of argument that came up, but it will become clear enough by mentioning the summary:

Similarly, it is not correct to hold that God depends on other conditions that generate his consciousnesses, . . .

Okay. This is someone saying, basically, what Ven. Yangchen just said: the consciousness keeps changing; and it is other conditions that make God's consciousness change. It changes due to *other conditions*:

. . . because God is permanent and a permanent phenomenon does not depend on impermanent conditions.

So God depends upon his own consciousness. If there are other conditions that change that consciousness, a permanent phenomenon is being changed by something impermanent. This raises another concept:

### ***Our consciousness defines us***

I'm an angry person when I have anger. I'm a loving person when I have love. Sometimes I have love; sometimes I have anger. If I have more anger, people call me an angry person; but of course, there are times I have love, anger and jealousy, etc.

If that defines me, my consciousness defines who I am as a person — that was your question before; right? How do you differentiate between the person and the consciousness? From a Buddhist point of view, very profoundly, the Self is just imputed upon the mind. Whatever I say about me, I say this in relation to my body, possibly, or say that in relation to my mind.

My mind definitely plays a huge part in saying that I am kind or not; hard working or not — because the body doesn't just do its own thing; it's under the control of the mind.

Therefore, here, we say God's consciousness also defines God. Who God is depends upon God's consciousness. The same idea for a living being.

### **Effects Depend Upon Multiple Causes**

But if God is permanent, that means God is not dependent upon any conditions. Still, we say the consciousness, God's consciousness, if that is dependent upon other conditions for its creation — so the second moment is just dependent upon the first moment; it is not dependent upon God; it's dependent on the first moment. It is not dependent on God; it is dependent on the first moment. The second moment is dependent upon the first moment.

If you were to say that, then since God has changed, when it comes to the second moment of consciousness, a different God, then God is dependent upon the first moment of consciousness to become who he is; and then he is dependent upon something impermanent to become who he is; and then again, he is impermanent; right.

You could argue with this. I'm not saying that, you walk home and you say, 'Okay. There's God, then he cannot be . . .'

I'm just saying that it helps us to do this reasoning in our mind. What does it mean to be permanent? What does it mean to depend upon something? To change? Dynamic; Cause and effect. This is something actually very, very important in Buddhism.

I still remember the first time I heard about this. It was in my second year of study or so. It really struck me; and it probably doesn't strike you; I don't know. It struck me, because I had this really strong wrong view. I had this idea of cause, one cause giving rise to one effect. I thought that was pretty simple: one cause giving rise to one effect.

And then I learned there is never a time when there is only one cause; and there is never a time when there is only one effect. It is impossible.

We talk about one cause; we kind of single out one cause just to understand; but there is never just one cause. There are so many causes and conditions. Giving rise to so many effects. To me, what was like, 'Wow! Cause and effect is much more complicated than I had previously thought.' And we just single out a cause for better understanding.

So really, this idea of just one cause, one God creating, that is seen as impossible in general in this context.

ALAIN: I was just thinking: you kind of conclude here that something permanent cannot give rise to something impermanent.

GESHE WANGMO: Cannot create something; yes.

ALAIN: But should we assume here that the permanent phenomenon is a physical phenomenon; so we are talking about God, are we talking about God as being a person, like being made out of matter?

GESHE WANGMO: What I am saying is that we relate to, that what I tried to say earlier: a lot of people who believe in God relate to God as though God is a living being. A lot of people, who believe in Buddha, relate to Buddha as if Buddha was God. This is one — in the first class, someone made this point and said that a lot of people relate to Buddha like Buddha was God.

So having a body, yeah. A body we cannot perceive.

ALAIN: Because I was just thinking, for example, about the qualities of a Buddha’s mind: are those permanent?

GESHE WANGMO: Which qualities do you mean: the Emptiness of the Buddha’s mind, or do you mean the impermanence of the Buddha’s mind; or do you mean the omniscience, itself?

ALAIN: Whatever.

GESHE WANGMO: Well, then, there are permanent and impermanent qualities. The question is those; and the answer is, there are those and those.

The lack of inherent existence — let me just say this so that it is not misunderstood.

The lack of inherent existence of the Buddha’s mind is a quality of the Buddha’s mind; so that is permanent. The ability to perceive all phenomena simultaneously, the omniscience, is also a quality of the Buddha’s mind; that is impermanent.

ALAIN: The quality of being able to see —

GESHE WANGMO: The omniscience, being omniscient is a quality of a Buddha’s mind.

ALAIN: That’s permanent?

GESHE WANGMO: No, no, that is an impermanent quality.

ALAIN: So sometimes he see’s things and sometimes he doesn’t?

GESHE WANGMO: No, impermanent doesn’t mean that. When you are impermanent, it doesn’t mean that one moment you are Alain; and the next moment you are not. That is not what impermanence means.

ALAIN: Well, anyway, we agree that there is a quality of the Buddha’s mind which is permanent.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, the emptiness of the Buddha’s mind.

ALAIN: The second moment of the Buddha’s mind, is that produced by the first moment?

GESHE WANGMO: No.

ALAIN: No, so how does the continuum of the Buddha's mind work?

GESHE WANGMO: One moment giving rise to the next giving rise to the next giving rise to the next. Changing moment-by-moment.

ALAIN: One moment of Buddha's mind gives rise to the next moment and the next moment.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, in that sense, impermanent.

ALAIN: But there we have an element of the first moment which is permanent.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes.

ALAIN: So you can say that it is also a cause for the second moment.

GESHE WANGMO: No. Not a cause; just an absence of a quality that never existed.

ALAIN: Absence of a quality.

GESHE WANGMO: Emptiness is just the absence of something that was never there. It is nothing dynamic. Emptiness just means the lack of inherent existence. The Buddha's mind was never inherently existent; will never be inherent.

ALAIN: In the *Uttaratantra*, it talks about the compassion in the Buddha's continuum never changes and it is permanent.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay, I've talked about this in last years' classes. Sometimes the word *permanent* can be used differently. In some contexts, sometimes permanent relates to something we say it is permanently compassion, such as that there will never be a time when it is not compassionate. For example, we say, we can permanently eliminate the afflictions such that the afflictions can never come back. So it is used in the sense meaning, irrevocably. There will never be a time when the Buddha's mind is not compassion.

ALAIN: But also, there will never be a time when the Buddha's mind will be more compassionate or less compassionate.

GESHE WANGMO: Exactly.

ALAIN: The Buddha's compassion will never change.

GESHE WANGMO: The level of compassion will never change, but the mind still changes. The intensity of compassion doesn't change, but the mind, in itself, changes.

You see, again, this takes us back to relativity. From the point of view of having a certain level of compassion, it doesn't change. From the point of view of taking to mind different objects moment-by-moment, it changes.

ALAIN: But nevertheless, it is all mind, qualities of mind —

GESHE WANGMO: But we don't talk about it from that perspective. It is important you bring this up, because it is a very common mistake that we make. From that perspective, it is such and such; therefore, it has to be such and such. We are not saying that.

Just because it is the same as being a mind from moment-to-moment does not mean that it is permanent; because, otherwise, your being the same Alain from moment-to-moment —

ALAIN: I’m not saying the mind is permanent.

GESHE WANGMO: Well, you just said the omniscient —

ALAIN: I’m saying the causes for the second moment of the mind include causes which are permanent.

GESHE WANGMO: No.

ALAIN: And some that are impermanent.

GESHE WANGMO: No. What are the causes that you are saying are impermanent that give rise to —

ALAIN: Can you take just half the qualities of a mind in the first moment which are permanent, and not have them in the second moment of the mind?

GESHE WANGMO: Can you take them and not have them the second moment; of course —

ALAIN: The first moment of the Buddha’s mind —

GESHE WANGMO: The qualities of the first moment of the Buddha’s consciousness are not present during the second moment. If you are talking about just being a mind in general. But being a table, the first moment of this table is a table and the second moment is a table. So does that quality of being a table exist in the second moment? We say, yeah, because it is a table. But in reality, what makes it a table in the first moment is different from what makes it a table in the second moment when it comes down to it. Am I making sense?

We use general terms in discussing something — okay. We are really going in a different direction here. I am just going to leave it at that. We can discuss this in the discussion group by the way for those of you who want to come to the discussion group.

I wasn’t going to do this today. I did get carried away today.

Yes, let me hear what you have to say, but let’s — yes, you in the very back.

STUDENT: Can we visualize the discussion inside a box where there is a law of interdependence of mind and object relations, which is a pseudo reality; where outside of the box, there is no mind, there is no object, there is Emptiness? But the question is whether, actually, the entity inside the box, which follows the laws of interdependence, can perceive the Emptiness outside of the box.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay. This is material for the discussion group. Sorry. If I go into this now, it will take me the next twenty minutes. We can do it on a one-to-one basis or maybe — but I really need to go back to the topic. I’m really sorry. Some of you had the opportunity to ask questions, but unfortunately, I’m going to have to leave it at that right now.

**TEXT REVIEW: Refuting [the Idea that a Creator God] is Impermanent & Self-Arisen**



Returning to this idea now, I am pretty sure that you have a gotten a sense of permanence, impermanence, etc. Now the next point here is *Refuting the Idea that a Creator God is Impermanent*, changing moment-by-moment. I am not sure how satisfactory you find the answer that has been given in here.

Basically, we did this last year, so I don’t need to read through all of this; and it is discussed again — the idea of God, etc. — is discussed later. So I will briefly say this much:

Here, someone is saying that God is impermanent, changing moment-by-moment, but nonetheless, Self-Arisen. I think that makes more sense, after everything we’ve heard, God is impermanent but self-arisen.

Here, the argument that is given is — and I don’t know who well this works. The response [to the material cited below<sup>4</sup>] to Dharmakirti’s *Pramanavarttika*:

*Since [God has] not [been] benefited in any way,  
Although [he is] impermanent, there is no pramana.*

I know that initially that doesn’t mean anything. First, Gyaltsab Je, taking the root text, has someone make the assertion:

[Someone:] **Although** God himself **is impermanent**, he did not previously experience attachment, etc., while in samsara; nor, as an antidote to that, [did he] depend on the accomplishing causes of familiarizing with generosity, etc. . . .

So what is being said? Someone is comparing the idea of God and Buddha. God is impermanent, but there was never a time when God was in samsara, so:

[. . . he did not previously experience attachment, etc., while in samsara; nor, as an antidote to [samsara] [did he] depend on the accomplishing causes of familiarizing with generosity, etc. . . .

---

<sup>4</sup> [Dharmakirti says in the *Pramanavarttika*:]

*Since [God has] not [been] benefited in any way,  
Although [he is] impermanent, there is no pramana.*

[Someone:] **Although** God himself **is impermanent**, he did not previously experience attachment, etc., while in samsara; nor, as an antidote to that, [did he] depend on the accomplishing causes of familiarizing with generosity, etc. Instead, since beginningless time, he has been generated by an earlier continuum of a similar type as being free from attachment and omniscient.

An opponent says that God is impermanent and thus changes moment by moment. However, this does not mean that there was a time when God was not omniscient nor a *valid cognizer being*.

Unlike the Buddha, God was not formerly an ordinary person taking repeated birth in samsara under the control of contaminated karma and afflictions such as anger, attachment, etc.; then eventually entering the Mahayana path, meditating on the six paramitas such as generosity, morality, etc., in order to attain the omniscient state of a *valid cognizer being*.

Instead, God is self-arisen because he has never depended on causes and conditions other than himself; since beginningless time God has been generated from former moments of God who were of a similar type in that they were always free from attachment and always omniscient.

So God was never in samsara and never had to work to come out of it.

. . . Instead, since beginningless time, he has been generated by an earlier continuum of a similar type as being free from attachment and *being* omniscient.

Right. God has always been “an earlier continuum of a similar type as being free from attachment and *as being* omniscient”; and I should really add this because it is not very clear: “as being free from attachment and omniscient”. So it is like being free from attachment and he has always been omniscient. Pardon?

VEN. YONTEN: Being omniscient and free from attachment.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, but the root text that I translated meant free from attachment and being omniscient; so I didn’t want to change the order really. But, yes, he is omniscient and free from attachment.

What can you say to that? Really very difficult.

First of all, self-arisen. I want to get back to this idea of self-arisen. Something is self-arisen: is there an idea of being self-arisen in Buddhism. Are there phenomena that are self-arisen?

Is there something that is dependent just on itself?

STUDENT: Karma.

GESHE WANGMO: Karma. Is karma only dependent on itself?

STUDENT: No.

GESHE WANGMO: No, what else is it dependent upon?

STUDENT: Intention.

GESHE WANGMO: She is so right. Intention. Without intention, you couldn’t have karma. Okay.

What about consciousness?

VEN. YONTEN: More subtle consciousness.

GESHE WANGMO: Never mind subtle or not subtle; just consciousness? Because a subtle consciousness is also consciousness.

Someone asked this question: doesn’t *self-arisen* exist in Buddhism, too? The idea of consciousness. Consciousness has existed since beginningless time; and it will always exist. Why do way say that there is a life before this lifetime? Because the first moment of consciousness in this lifetime must have been preceded by a prior moment of consciousness. So we establish that each moment must have been preceded by a former moment of consciousness, former, former, former . . . Very important idea of Buddhism.

If that is so, is consciousness self-arisen?

VEN. YONTEN: Yes.

STUDENT: No.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay. So Jeff says, yes. Yangchen says, no; you say, no; you say, no. Why not?

STUDENT: Because it is dependent upon the previous moment of consciousness, it cannot be self-arisen.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay. That's a good point. But really, here, if we agree that God is impermanent, we could say God is impermanent because God now only depends upon the previous moment, nothing else. In that sense, we could say, okay, consciousness is self-arisen because it only depends on the previous moment of consciousness; on nothing else. Is that possible?

STUDENT: It depends on other factors.

GESHE WANGMO: It always depends on other factors, such as?

STUDENT: Environmental factors.

GESHE WANGMO: Environmental factors. More importantly? You cannot have a consciousness without an object, without an object.

There is no objectless mind. Mind always has an object, by definition. Even if it is nothingness. So think of mind as an agent, as something that does something. It perceives something; it realizes something; it analyzes something. It always does something with something. That's one thing.

STUDENT: And there needs to be a sense that they are not —

GESHE WANGMO: For a sense consciousness, you need to have a sense; absolutely.

STUDENT: Or a mind consciousness as well.

GESHE WANGMO: Mental consciousness and sense consciousness; there are those two types. So some consciousnesses are dependent on the physical basis; absolutely. But what else is consciousness dependent upon? This is really a very Buddhist idea that it is dependent on something other than itself. Forget about the object. What else is it dependent on?

STUDENT: Moments.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay. Moments; what else?

STUDENT: Contact.

GESHE WANGMO: Contact, okay.

STUDENT: A cause.

GESHE WANGMO: A cause, yes, it is dependent upon a cause. That's true even though the cause is consciousness, itself. It is dependent upon its own impermanence. Does that make sense?

We have a quality of impermanence. I am changing moment by moment; I depend upon my own impermanence; and my own impermanence depends on me — interdependence.

So consciousness, therefore, a former moment of consciousness, my impermanence, my changing moment by moment and me, they are one entity. They arise together. They both give rise to the next moment. The impermanence gives rise to the next moment. SO the former moment of consciousness, plus its impermanence, its changeability, its

non-physicality — all of those are qualities you can really change; and they all, as a collective, give rise to the second moment. Does that make sense?

This is a very new concept, maybe, to some of you. We talk about the qualities of something; they all work together. You can’t separate them; and they all give rise — the impermanence, in the same way, gives rise — Pardon?

ALAIN: That’s exactly what I was trying to say about the mind of the Buddha.

GESHE WANGMO: Why didn’t you say it? You were trying to say it, but you didn’t say it.

ALAIN: . . . together give rise to both, the impermanent and permanent.

GESHE WANGMO: No, but you said permanent qualities. I never said that the permanent qualities give rise to the next moment; I said the impermanent. The qualities that are impermanent, like the changeability, being non-physical, being a mind —

ALAIN: Certain qualities are permanent and others are impermanent.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, but the permanent ones do not; they are just the Emptiness —

ALAIN: — they aren’t the substantial cause.

GESHE WANGMO: They are not a cause; they are permanent.

ALAIN: But you can say that they —

GESHE WANGMO: Never mind. We are talking about something dynamic here. I think you need to understand permanence and impermanence more; what it means to be permanent and impermanent; right.

Just this one last thing. When we talk about Emptiness, for example, in the end, it is just a negative of something the absence of something. For example, the absence of Barak Obama in this room: that is nothing dynamic, changing, fluctuating. It is fixed. It is just an absence; right. Barak Obama is impermanent; the room is impermanent. Just the absence of Barak Obama in this room.

When you talk about something permanent, it comes down to an absence of something — that’s it. And that is not something dynamic that gives rise to something else by being subdivided into moments that dynamically give rise.

Okay. Yes.

AIDAN: The qualities of the mind is in the mind; right?

GESHE WANGMO: The qualities of the mind —

AIDAN: Not the mind itself; but they’re part of the mind when you say —

GESHE WANGMO: They’re part of the mind.

AIDAN: . . . so the qualities of the mind don’t seem to be something they depend on external to the mind, but its object, you’re saying, is?

GESHE WANGMO: Right. The object is —

AIDAN: . . . in the same sense that God is self-arisen: God only comes from God, then by analogy, you can’t use the qualities of the mind as being . . . comes back to the external —

GESHE WANGMO: It just depends on how you argue. If you were to say that God is only dependent on God. If you were to say that God is dependent upon something that comes along with God, okay. I know we used the objects; but if you say, God is only dependent on God — not on impermanence, not on anything that is a quality of God but is not God, then I would use this argument. It just depends.

The way this is done here, you are trying to address any kind of view, because there's no end to the views we hold. So if there's a sense that God has only been created by God, well, then it is also dependent on things other than God.

If you take your argument: Well, God is also dependent on objects, on interactions. The God in the Bible, the way Bible is described at times in the Bible, he is talking, communicating, perceiving what human beings do, and then acting or reacting accordingly. So there is definitely this dependence on an object other than itself.

So if God permanent, there couldn't be that influence by something impermanent.

AIDAN: Is there any possibility of conceiving of a Buddha that was always a Buddha?

GESHE WANGMO: Pardon. Okay. Is it possible to have a being who was always a Buddha: that is exactly what the question is here. Is there a being that was always a Buddha?

Very difficult. Because we come down to a statement in Buddhism. There's an idea in Buddhism that afflictions have always existed. If afflictions have always existed; there's no beginning to afflictions, we cannot say that there is a Buddha who has always been Enlightened; because every living being must have had affliction at some point.

VEN. YONTEN: Must have known suffering.

AIDAN: A sentient being.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes. Must have known suffering; exactly. Every sentient or living being, we have to say if it is true that afflictions were always present; that there is no beginning to afflictions but there is an end to them; then from there —

STUDENT: There is no beginning but an end?

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, it is strange; right.

STUDENT: So this is as a Buddha we want to bring an end of the afflictions.

GESHE WANGMO: There is an end of afflictions.

STUDENT: If there is no beginning, how can there be —

GESHE WANGMO: This is exactly what we need. Our mind needs something solid. It needs a beginning. Our mind needs a beginning. For us, it is very unsettling that there's no beginning. But there's no beginning to physical objects, either. What's the big deal? There's no beginning to mind. Why is it harder to understand that there's no beginning to afflictions as opposed to mind?

STUDENT: Because there's an end to afflictions, and there's no end to mind.

GESHE WANGMO: Because of that reason. You're saying that just for that reason. If there's an end to something there has to be a beginning to it?

STUDENT: In Buddhism, you come across a lot of polarities sometimes, and —

GESHE WANGMO: So you're saying — good, good. Sorry to interrupt you. So you are saying there's no beginning to afflictions, but since there's an end, if something has an end, it has to have a beginning.

It is okay with mind: there's no beginning to mind; there's no end to mind; so, okay. But if something has an end, it must have a beginning. What was the beginning of the afflictions?

STUDENT: — that you could have an end, but it was beginningless.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, I understand your logic. It is a good point. I think it is good to understand these points for the understanding of afflictions. Was there a time when there were no afflictions? It seems that suddenly the misperception arose. But you see, if there's no beginning to afflictions, what caused the misperception? What caused the misperception? And again, can you cite a beginning to the misperception? That is the difficulty.

So I know it is not very satisfactory; I don't find it very satisfactory. And I guess with my own limited mind, I came to the conclusion that I don't understand it because my mind doesn't have the capacity to perceive it. Like a blind person doesn't have the capacity to perceive shape or color. The mind actually has the capacity, that's due to the physical basis that is missing. But certain things, if you are a five year old child, you don't yet have the capacity to do very complicated math equations.

Therefore, that is the logic right now. Here, I don't know how satisfactory this is. The answer here, what they are saying is basically: Well, if you say that God has existed always as God, you cannot, there's no correct proof, reason or proof.

[Response:] Regarding the subject, God, it follows that **there is no *pramana*** . . .

Or correct reason. Here *pramana* means *proof*.

. . . **there is no *pramana*** that is a proof [establishing that] {God} is an Omniscient One who has been generated by an earlier continuum of a similar type, because there has not been any previous moment during an earlier samsaric period when [he] has been harmed or **benefited in any way** by conditions that are thoroughly afflicted or completely pure.

So here they basically say: you cannot prove that God has always existed, because there was never a time when he was just an ordinary person who was benefitted by completely pure things — the path, realization of Emptiness — and there was never a time when he was harmed by afflictions.

Basically, here, Dharmakirti is saying that you can establish the existence of Buddha, because there was a time when Buddha was just like us; and by understanding his consciousness, by understanding the mind of the Buddha when he was just an ordinary person that was afflicted, we can understand that these afflictions can be overcome. They are not in the nature of the mind; they are just temporary. They are adventitious. Since they are not in the nature of the mind, and since they are not in accordance with reality, those afflictions, by understanding how phenomena really exist, we can remove them.

So the mind can be purified. In that way you can prove the existence of Buddha. But you can't do that with God. Because you've never had a time when he was just an ordinary person, so you can't establish that there is such a mind.

But that seems a little difficult. I, personally, there are more arguments that come later. This one, I'm not 100% convinced by. Just because Buddha was just an ordinary person and you can prove that, which is what we are trying to do here. Prove that it is possible to eliminate the afflictions. There is correct reasoning that can prove that.

But God, how can you prove the existence of God? So I don't know. I am just sharing my view that this argument is not totally satisfactory. But anyway.

This, basically, is where we got to in the Fall of 2015.

## **Introducing Text for Spring 2016**

You've already used the material that you've been given for this year. We started with page 94 only because I added a few things.

So for those of you who had the material from before — also Aidan now has all the material; he can put it on line. And with this, we concluded this part of the text.

Now, the next section of the text deals with those [my guess is] non-Indian Buddhist philosophers at the time of the Buddha or at the time of Dharmakirti. And this is maybe interesting to know.

Historically, Buddhists debated with the non-Buddhists. In fact, in Nalanda University where many of the great masters lived, non-Buddhists lived there. Non-Buddhists were highly respected; and it was seen as very beneficial to exchange with one another, to have that intellectual exchange. In order to understand better, it was always seen that the more people involved, the better.

The idea of debate is based on the principle that two minds are better than one. Even in this class situation, the more people say, the better it is for everyone — if you see it that way, of course. From my classmates, I've learned from debating with each and every one of them — even the ones whom we thought were better or worse or whatever. One who may have been seen as weaker in the debate, you could learn so much from what they said; because it was another intellect, another person, another idea. It became more conscious by just expressing it. So it was always seen that the more the better; the more input was seen as the better because there's always something new. It makes sense in terms of the inter-dependence. We are dependent on so many factors. And the more there are the better it is, basically, from the point of view of growing intellectually.

At the time of Dharmakirti, I suppose, they had these non-Buddhists who established reasons for asserting there was God. There are three reasons they posited — three syllogisms. Three logical reasons which say: 'A is B because it is C'. Those reasons for why there is God, I will introduce to you next time.

Let's do the dedication.