

## Chapter Two of Dharmakirti's Pramanavarttika

ADVANCED BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY COURSE – TERM 6

Class 9 - 2017 April 28 – Friday<sup>1</sup>

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### D R A F T of CLASS 9 Transcript

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20170428C09T1 - TRACK 1

#### REVIEW - CONTINUUM

One of the most important concepts in what we are studying is the idea of a continuum. When Dharmakirti sets forth reasonings for past and future lives, in this case, first, the reasoning for past lives, in that reasoning, three different subjects (of syllogisms) are given: Exhalation/Inhalation — Respiration, Consciousness or the Sense Powers.<sup>▲</sup> Then the statement that all of those depend upon a former continuum, on their own personal continuum.

So the first moment of consciousness in this lifetime depends upon its own continuum, which gave rise to the present consciousness which is, therefore, the reasoning for past lives.

Now, *continuum*, I put in a footnote 82 on page 178,<sup>3</sup> because of the discussion of, first of all, an *earlier continuum of a similar type*. Dharmakirti mentions this as part of the syllogism that the first moment of consciousness in this lifetime depends on a continuum, an *earlier continuum*, or its *earlier continuum of a similar type*, which means on its own substantial cause.

So *former moment*, a former continuum that has the potential to give rise to it. So to be *of a similar type*, here, means that it is of such type that it is similar enough such that it can give rise to the present consciousness.

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<sup>2</sup> ROUGH DRAFT -



<sup>3</sup> Not only do the seed and the sprout form a continuum, the seed and the sprout are both continuums. The seed is a continuum because it is made up of earlier and later moments of a seed, while the sprout is a continuum because it is made up of earlier and later moments of a sprout. It is important to understand that there is *no* seed or sprout that is not a continuum; whatever is a seed is necessarily a continuum and whatever is a sprout is necessarily a continuum. This is because there are no smallest moment in time. Hence, any impermanent phenomenon consists of earlier and later moments which can again be subdivided into earlier and later moments. In fact, any moment of a phenomenon can be endlessly subdivided into earlier and later moments, for if that were not the case it would absurdly follow that there is a smallest moment in time that does not consist of sub-moments. continuum because it is made up of earlier and later moments of a seed, while the sprout is a continuum because it is made up of earlier and later moments of a sprout. It is important to understand that there is *no* seed or sprout that is not a continuum; whatever is a seed is necessarily a continuum and whatever is a sprout is necessarily a continuum. This is because there are no smallest moments in time. Hence, any impermanent phenomenon consists of earlier and later moments which can again be subdivided into earlier and later moments. In fact, any moment of a phenomenon can be endlessly subdivided into earlier and later moments, for if that were not the case it would absurdly follow that there is a smallest moment in time that does not consist of sub-moments.

In this context, a seed, for instance, is the *earlier continuum of a similar type* of a sprout. What is the *earlier continuum of a similar type* of a sprout? It is the seed.

In that way, if you think of a seed and its sprout, they are a continuum. Seed and sprout are a continuum. They form a continuum.

### **Analysis of Emptiness & Continua**

Actually, there's a way in which you can think of Emptiness or Selflessness, Emptiness, that phenomena cannot really be found from their own side, by thinking of the continuum of a seed and a sprout.

STUDENT: What is the continuum of a sound?

### **A Seed & Sprout are a Continuum**

GESHE WANGMO: Let's talk about the continuum of seed and sprout first, and sound a bit later. I didn't talk about sound. I mentioned, seed and sprout.

My question is: if you think of a seed and a sprout, they form a continuum. So if you think about seed and sprout, that continuum, the idea of Emptiness — *i.e.*, that phenomena do not exist absolutely, from their own side; they cannot be found when looking for them — this can be explained on the basis of seed and sprout to a certain degree. In which way?

VEN. KUNPHEN: You can never say when the sprout starts. You can never define the moment.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes. When we say, seed and sprout, when I say that, something appears very clearly to your mind; right? It seems to be very clear: Oh, there's a seed; there's a sprout; and the continuum, okay, seed becomes sprout. But what I mention in this note is that actually the seed, itself, is a continuum; and the sprout is a continuum. Not only do the seed and sprout form a continuum, the seed and the sprout are each a continuum. So first, to explain this.

The seed is a continuum:

Not only do the seed and the sprout form a continuum, the seed and the sprout are both continuums. The seed is a continuum because it is made up of earlier and later moments of a seed, while the sprout is a continuum because it is made up of earlier and later moments of a sprout. It is important to understand that there is *no* seed or sprout that is not a continuum; whatever is a seed is necessarily a continuum and whatever is a sprout is necessarily a continuum. This is because there are no smallest moment in time.

So a continuum, think of a continuum — [holding up a mala]. This is a continuum. Here each of the beads represents a moment of time. In that sense you have a continuum of seed because there are different moments of seed in time. However, each of those moments, again, can be subdivided into an earlier moment, a later moment and a middling moment, if you like. And each of those sub-moments, again, can be subdivided into earlier moment, later moment and middling moment. So there is no end. You cannot necessarily be able to physically subdivide but

mentally, there's no end to the moments that make up a continuum. Does that make sense?

That being the case, therefore, when you start looking for a seed, where do you search for a seed? If there was really an absolute seed, we would try to find that absolute seed where the seed is and no where else: we would look for its parts and its moments in time. But then you can subdivide its moments in time endlessly; and in terms of its parts, you can subdivide those endlessly. There's never a smallest moment, because each smallest moment, again, has parts that are other than itself. It consists of parts that are not itself. And each sub-moment consists of moments that are not that original moment. So the more you look for it, you keep dividing and dividing it, and you don't find anything. So in terms of going towards a subtler and subtler level.

Also, on top of that, because each moment of seed and sprout can be endlessly divided, when is the exact moment that a seed becomes a sprout? What is the exact moment? If we think we found that exact moment, well, that exact moment, again, can be subdivided into a future moment, a past moment and a present moment.

To find the present moment, each present moment, again, can be subdivided into three moments; so basically, you can never find a present moment, that exact moment when a seed becomes a sprout. And on top of not being able to find that, well, when is the sprout no longer a seed? When is the seed now a sprout? Who is to decide. If there were an absolute — this idea is so important.

Okay, one of you explain that. Felipe, can you explain what I just said?

Filipe: You cannot find the present moment within a continuum of time . . .

GESHE WANGMO: How did I start, what did I say at the very beginning?

FELIPE: You can relate the seed and the sprout . . .

GESHE WANGMO: First of all, the seed and the sprout form a continuum. That's how I started.

FELIPE: The fact that there is a continuum . . .

GESHE WANGMO: So the idea of a continuum of the seed and the sprout, understanding that continuum helps us to understand Emptiness. Okay, AIDAN, what else did I say? Anything. What are seed and sprout?

AIDAN: The seed is a continuum and the sprout is a continuum.

GESHE WANGMO: The seed is a continuum; the sprout is a continuum. Each, individually, is a continuum. Is there a seed that is not a continuum?

STUDENT: No.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay. So the smallest moment of a seed — isn't there just one moment of seed that is not a continuum? No. Because each moment, again, can be subdivided into moments. Therefore, in terms of Emptiness, how does that help

us to understand Emptiness? That each moment of seed or sprout can be endlessly subdivided, how does that help us with Emptiness?

Ken, how does — in terms of a seed, it consists of moments in time, so each moment can be again subdivided. So how does that understanding help us to understand that there is no *absolute* seed?

KEN: We can't say that there is a particular moment of germination.

GESHE WANGMO: Exactly. The exact moment of germination, in other words, the exact moment of this being a sprout now —

KEN: We don't know.

GESHE WANGMO: We don't know. You can subdivide it again and again. And that's important: to our mind, it seems to be so solid, so absolute to be a sprout; so absolute to be a seed. But when we use reasoning, we can't even find the exact moment when it became a sprout, or when it became a seed, because each moment can be subdivided. From that point of view, just the understanding that everything is a continuum: however small that continuum may be — a nano-second, one thousandth of a nano-second, a millionth of a nano-second — you can go on and on and subdivide endlessly.

Talk about the idea of beginningless lifetimes being unsatisfactory, the fact that each sub-moment of anything you can subdivide endlessly, well, I don't think that is very satisfactory. Our sense of some solidity definitely gets shaken; doesn't it.

***If there is No Smallest Moment of Time, What is the Last Moment of burning Butter Lamp?***

AIDAN: Say, the last moment of the butter lamp?

GESHE WANGMO: We do talk about the last moment of a butter lamp, but in a conventional sense. Why does Aidan mention the last moment of a butter lamp? Aidan, why did you talk about the last moment of a butter lamp?

AIDAN: It's used as an illustration, last moment of a butter lamp before the lamp goes out, we're all familiar with that; and we call that the last moment. And now we're saying, there is no last moment; you can't find it.

GESHE WANGMO: So Aidan is arguing here, well, we can't find the smallest moment. He's debating, 'You're saying there's no smallest moment. Therefore, there is no *last moment*. But don't we always cite the last moment of a butter lamp in order to illustrate impermanence?' Right.

If I talk about the third moment of a butter lamp, there's a fourth moment, a fifth moment, they all look the same to me, so I'm not aware of the impermanence of the butter lamp when I take an in-between moment of the continuum. But the last moment, one moment there's the flame of a butter lamp and the next moment, it's gone.

Here the impermanence is obvious to me; I can see it with my senses. That is taken as an example to understand subtle impermanence.

So is it correct to talk about a *last moment*? Can you talk about a first moment.

STUDENT: I would say, no.

STUDENT: You probably can't find it actually, but it appears that way to our eyes.

GESHE WANGMO: So you can't find it, but it appears to us. Just because you can't find it, does that mean it is not there?

STUDENT: No.

GESHE WANGMO: Right, no. Yes.

STUDENT: The flame is not there.

GESHE WANGMO: So if you say the last moment cannot be found, then you also have to say the flame cannot be found, so there's no flame.

STUDENT: . . . there's a butter lamp, but not a burning one.

GESHE WANGMO: So but the first moment of the butter lamp, when was that exact moment.

STUDENT: She's saying the first moment of the lit butter lamp.

### ***Lack of Intrinsically Existent First Moment of Sprout Germination***

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, I should say the first moment of the lit butter lamp, the first moment of the flame. But when was that? When was the exact first moment of the sprout?

ASHISH: This is a question that is coming around in my mind and I don't know how to reframe my thinking. Thinking back to last summer when we were talking about the difference of the first moment that you become a Bodhisattva to the very next moment, what is the difference. And the thing was that the very next moment is the first moment that you realize that there's a previous moment. So we did the continuum of the seed and sprout, regardless of how small you cut the moment, there is a moment that it is a seed and then it is a sprout.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay, there is such a moment.

ASHISH: No, two moments. In one moment, it is a seed; and in the very next moment, it is a sprout. And because it is a continuum of the two things, it seems to me that we're talking about the wrong thing.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay, very good. First of all, you're saying, "All right, even though each moment in time can be endlessly subdivided — so we don't really find the exact moment where a seed becomes a sprout, but okay, we do say, 'Now it is a seed. Now it is no longer a sprout.'" Right. And it seems as though there is something from the side of the object, something that is intrinsic, inherent to the seed or to the sprout, that makes us decide that now it is a seed; now it is a sprout.

If that were really the case, Kelsang was first.

## RELATIVE & ULTIMATE ANALYSIS

KELSANG: You have two things, the relative and the ultimate. The moment you are going into analysis of the ultimate, then there is nothing. You can't have these two things together.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay, I agree with you that when we talk about the *absolute* — I like to use the word, *absolute* — as if there were something *absolute* there — *absolute* as if there were something totally independent — in that moment, we don't find anything. We need to talk on a relative level.

So how do you explain a present moment on a relative level?

On a relative level, there is a present moment. Can you explain to me, on the relative level —

KELSANG: . . . scientific level . . . we can go on up to that. Beyond that, I think it is not possible to analyze even further, because we are going into the ultimate realm, so we cannot —

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, I agree. Kelsang is absolutely right: the moment we start analyzing, we're actually no longer moving on a relative level, but we're getting into the ultimate. If you look too closely, you don't find the present moment of something. Absolutely, true.

Let me give you the example I like to use of the seed and the sprout — also in terms of when we analyze further.

There is a sense that there is something intrinsic in the seed that makes us say, 'This is a seed. There is something intrinsic in the sprout that makes us think, 'This is a sprout.

And although we need to observe this, there is a sense — and I guess we need to get in touch with our own sense of this — that there is some *seedness*, some *sproutness*, something coming from its side that makes us decide that. I like the example of taking slow motion film of a seed transforming into a sprout. You have all of these photographs lined up, and I ask you to choose the moment where this is not longer a seed, and now it is a sprout. Will you all agree?

STUDENT: No.

GESHE WANGMO: No, it is a matter of opinion. It is totally subjective, so that shows a sprout is a sprout out of subjective reasons; not because it is objectively a sprout; right?

Just think of these moments. When we don't think of subtle moments, yesterday's seed is today's sprout. That's easy. We weren't looking at all of these photographs. But then if I make you look at all of those pictures, then suddenly what was so clear cut as a seed and what was so clearly cut as being a sprout keeps disappearing.

So exactly as Kelsang is saying.



Usually, what is merely relative, we take to be absolute. And when we start analyzing it, it starts disappearing because there is nothing absolute.

So the thing, itself, something existing ultimately cannot be found, so it seems like the whole thing, itself, is disappearing; but it is only disappearing because we're looking for some ultimate nature which doesn't exist.

Of course, on a relative level, we can say, 'Okay, due to our subjective opinion, our definition, as Randy puts it nicely — it depends on how you define something — on the basis of that we then say, seed or sprout.

So you see how the understanding of a continuum can be so helpful. Because our entire life we deal with continua that to us, number one, are permanent; right? They are like these blocks of things that we believe intrinsically, instinctively, not rationally, believe to be permanent; right? And every now and then, they make a sudden change: a new wrinkle, okay, a little aging; but not like I'm changing all of the time.

So our entire world consists of continua that are constantly changing and cannot, actually, be found when you engage in ultimate analysis. That is in the sense of what exactly makes up the thing.

So I think it is extremely important that we develop the sense, through these studies, that everything is a continuum: this table is a continuum; this is a continuum, an every changing continuum. So are we. We are just continua. We are here for awhile, and we won't be here forever. And then we continue on in a different form. Just as you cannot cut a continuum of a table — you cannot cut the continuum of a table. You cannot make this table be there one moment, and the next moment disappear. You can change it; transform it; take the wood, burn this piece, do something it transforms; but its continuum just continues in a different form. Maybe it is spread out, but it is still a continuum.

### **SPACE - Permanent & Impermanent Space**

STUDENT: What is the continuum of space?

GESHE WANGMO: What kind of space are you talking about?

STUDENT: Just in general, space.

GESHE WANGMO: Because in Buddhism, there are ideas of two different types of space: one is impermanent and one is permanent. So the word in space is not actually such a good translation; but that's the only translation we have. The permanent space is the absence of obstruction; right. In front of me, I have a type of space that I cannot see, that I cannot in any way get in touch with with my senses, because it is abstract; it is just the absence of obstructive contact. That's permanent space.

Then there is the one that we can see all around that is the impermanent one. So I assume that you are talking about the impermanent one?

What is the continuum of that? Its former and later moments. The space right in front of you, if I put my hands in there, then it moves somewhere else. Then I put

my hands there, and it keeps moving. That's the point; it doesn't have to be in the same place: it keeps moving; it keeps changing. That's important. Nonetheless, it is a continuum.

Why is the idea of a continuum so important, in particular with consciousness? Consciousness is a continuum that can only be created by an earlier continuum. In other words, the thing that mainly gives rise to it is also consciousness. So it is not the parents' ovum and sperm, it is a former moment of consciousness.

I wanted to stress that and this footnote. When we talk of the seed and the sprout as a continuum, the seed, itself, is a continuum; the sprout is a continuum. Everything, anything impermanent is a continuum. Does that make sense.

KELSANG: What are the characteristics of a permanent space?

GESHE WANGMO: I was hoping no one would ask that question. For us, permanent phenomena are a little difficult, because our mind doesn't work like that; we're not very concerned about permanence.

Usually, permanence just refers to a negation. An absence of something.

KELSANG: Permanent is defined in certain Buddhist text as something which is not changeable by . . . factor —

GESHE WANGMO: It's not changing moment-by-moment.

KELSANG: It's not momentary; there are three characteristics. I forget the third one. So is this also defined --

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, the same, same. It doesn't change moment by moment. Something that is permanent is, usually, said to be something that is an *absence*. We also say that things such as *existence*, itself, is permanent; but never mind the reason for why I am saying, in the end, it comes down to some kind of negation.

Here, permanent means it is not a dynamic phenomenon that is interacting with other things and changes into something other than itself; right.

### **Negative Phenomena**

KELSANG: When you say that it is a negation, it gives me the feeling of nihilism.

GESHE WANGMO: No. A negation of something — I usually say, the absence of. Okay, I'll change my example: it used to be, the absence of Obama on this table. Now, it is the absence of Donald Trump on this table.

So the absence of Donald Trump on this table is not non-existent. I'm actually quite pleased that there's that absence, because the presence of Donald Trump would be disturbing, I mean, of course, on this table.

Therefore, the absence of Donald Trump on this table exists; that is not nihilism. The absence of this piece of paper on the table, that would be an example of an extreme of nihilism in the sense that I'm denying the existence of something that is actually there, because the piece of paper is on the table. So the absence of this paper on this table is an example of a non-existent, because that absence doesn't

exist right now. It is a presence of this paper that exists; therefore, the absence of this piece of paper does not exist. It actually makes sense; doesn't it.

So the absence of Donald Trump on this table exists; right. Like I'm saying this is important because, of course, one of the most important concepts in Buddhism is permanent, a mere absence. What is that? Emptiness or Selflessness: it is just negating something.

What do we negate when we negate Donald Trump on this table? The presence of Donald Trump — Donald Trump actually exists. So we are not negating Donald Trump in general; just his presence on the basis of this table.

With Emptiness, we are negating something that has never existed and does not exist anywhere else; it is negating a characteristic that we made up. We believe in some kind of permanent, independent self. That is the center of the universe; that needs to be cherished, whose happiness is more important than anyone else's; and therefore, we act out on this total illusion, total hallucination or total fabrication. So understanding Emptiness is just understanding the absence of something that has never existed anywhere — not in the White House or anywhere else.

Therefore, it is important to understand permanents versus impermanents. Of course, most of the things we deal with are impermanent; consciousness is one of those.

**If First Moment of Consciousness in the Continuum of a Newly Conceived Person is Not from Physical Ovum & Sperm, does it come from the Parents' Awarenesses? As Part of Matter? From a Single/Divine/Group Origin?**

Going back to consciousness. We said that consciousness — this is the reasoning set forth:

The first moment of consciousness in the continuum of a newly conceived person, that type of consciousness does not exist independently of a similar type — or does not exist independently of its own substantial cause — that which gave rise to it; its own form of continuum which gave rise to it. It doesn't because it is a consciousness; it is an awareness, therefore, it must have been preceded by another moment of awareness. And where can that be found? Only in a previous life.

This is the argument here. I think we still need to go back: Why is our consciousness — the first moment of our own awareness. Think of your own conception, your own personal conception. We don't remember, of course; but there's no doubt that it took place. Think of your own personal conception.

Could your first moment, whenever that moment was, could that be the substantial result of your parents' consciousness? Because there are only two options:

- Either that which gave rise to your consciousness was the ovum and sperm — and Dharmakirti presents a whole argument about why it couldn't be that; or
- It was another moment of consciousness. But instead of saying it is a moment from an earlier life, it's your parents' consciousnesses.

We need to think about that. In this text, it is, interestingly, not mentioned. Why? Because the materialists who debated with Dharmakirti, they very strongly held a view that consciousness, awareness, is the substantial result of ovum and sperm, of the elements. The elements create consciousness. They never had the doubt that it could've been your parents. But why is our consciousness not the substantial result of a little bit of my dad's and a little bit of my mom's?

STUDENT: Because their continuums can't be divided.

GESHE WANGMO: So one argument would be, you can't split off a piece of awareness, because the idea here is that it is not physical. Something that is made of atoms, you can take a piece — but you could argue, that when when we're born in the womb, first there are no sense consciousnesses. So initially, from a Buddhist point of view, when you're born, there's only the mental consciousness, and then slowly when the sense powers develop, the brain and nervous system develop, then you can have sense consciousness that were not there initially. In fact, every night when we go to sleep, the process is very similar to that of death. The process of waking up is very similar to rebirth.

Every night the sense consciousnesses — the technical term used is — dissolve; and the next morning, they come back. So during the night, you only had one, the mental consciousness; and then when you wake up, there are six again. I wonder, sometimes, which one comes first. There's a sense that you still can't hear, but you can feel something. You can feel hot, but you haven't noticed that your neighbor's yelling on the balcony. Sometimes we don't hear it yet; we wake up because we're hot or cold or whatever, and then as we open our eyes we can hear a sound that we know must have been there before because we only hear half a sentence. What happened to the rest of the sentence? We didn't hear it, even though we'd already been awake for two seconds.

The sense consciousness, therefore, possibly, arise sequentially. So you have consciousnesses from one to six, from six to one. So couldn't you just have mom's consciousness, dad's consciousness, forming one?

STUDENT: You said something about how if something is a substantial cause of something else, once the result is present, can the cause still be, for instance, a tree and the table. The tree can't still be existing.

GESHE WANGMO: Nice. What is she saying. If something is the substantial cause of something else, when that something else is present, the substantial cause must be gone. Do you all agree?

If our parents' consciousness is the substantial cause of our present mind, she would argue that our parents should be mindless.

Who has a counter argument to that?

STUDENT: You're only saying a piece of their mind. You're not saying their whole mind.

GESHE WANGMO: Okay. So there's just a piece of the mind, so the rest can continue on.

STUDENT: From one fire, you can start other fires, and the original fire is still there.

GESHE WANGMO: So she's thinking of a spark, but there's another argument. Think of fire and smoke.

KELSANG: Two pieces of the continuum cannot exist together. One has to cease —

GESHE WANGMO: Ashish says fire and smoke exist together: isn't fire the cause of the smoke?

KELSANG: It's not that they are both fire. Whatever has transformed from fire to smoke has passed. They don't exist simultaneously.

GESHE WANGMO: So I think what Kelsang is saying in philosophical language: The first moment of fire gives rise to the first moment of smoke. The second moment of fire doesn't give rise to the first moment of smoke. The first moment of smoke and the second moment of fire exist together, but the second moment of fire was never the cause of the first moment of smoke, which is why there's no problem. It was the first moment of fire, which no longer exists at the time of the first moment of smoke.

In fact the first moment of fire gives rise to the second moment of fire and the first moment of smoke.

Confusing?

STUDENT: Yes.

GESHE WANGMO: First you have fire.

ASHISH: I disagree. Sometimes you have smoke first.

GESHE WANGMO: No, because you don't see the spark.

ASHISH: You don't have to see the spark. You can have smoke first before the fire.

GESHE WANGMO: Wait. There is always some fire element first, even if it is not visible. You have heat. That's put it that way. In Tibetan, fire and fire element are the same. Sorry, maybe I should clarify more. Fire doesn't necessarily mean wildly burning, but fire element, heat. So the fire element is a specific one — it's not every heat. But a fire element gives rise to smoke.

The first moment of fire gives rise to the first moment of smoke. But they don't exist together. And the second moment of fire comes a moment after the first moment of fire. The second moment of fire and the first moment of smoke exist together. The third moment of fire and the second moment of smoke exist together.

So if Rachel's consciousness was the substantial result of her parents', then that consciousness of your parents that gave rise to your consciousness is no longer there, but it continues on just as the fire continues on; except their consciousness no longer produces your consciousness. The question would be, why not? Why did it stop? Why does the parents' consciousness not continue producing little baby consciousnesses? Why just in that moment? Like we know with the ovum and the sperm, how they come together and create a body. So the only way it could work that our present mind is the substantial result of that of our parents is that a piece of

their consciousness must have been in in the ovum and sperm, and melded together and that molten consciousness — whatever. Why would that be absurd?

Can you think of an absurdity to that, Rein?

REIN: Just that it sounds impossible.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes. It is actually not a bad argument; in a way it is kind of powerful. I don't think science looks at it that way. I don't think modern science says, 'Oh, we've got a part of our mom and dad.'

STUDENT: Would then not be sort of a perfect amalgamation of the mom and dad?

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, but you could argue with the ovum and sperm, right. If I were in a debate situation and Rein would debate with me, and I had to answer.

Rein: I wouldn't debate you.

GESHE WANGMO: If you would debate with me, I would say, well, if you are saying that you get a part from your parents, wouldn't you be exactly a replica of mom and dad.

REIN: At least two halves.

GESHE WANGMO: What about my body, I'm not an exact replica, because I just get a part of my parents chromosomes, so in the same way just get a part of a consciousness. But I would debate back, if I get a piece of my parents, there must be some knowledge passed through, there must be something, because their consciousness is full of knowledge.

STUDENT: And their mental continuum of experience.

GESHE WANGMO: Experiences and imprints — unless they just leave the imprints out and just give — I don't know. Can you separate the imprints from the consciousness? No, you can't. So I don't want to exclude this from your argument, because it is still interesting to think: where did we come from? Where do we go?

Of course, when you have mutations, you just get one parent's consciousness, shouldn't you be much more similar. That's a thing. Physically, we are quite similar to our parents, actually. Either we're closer to the mom or the dad, but our consciousness can be so very different. Even if you are raised on a totally different continent from your parents, you still look similar to them. Possibly they would be able to identify you from a photograph. Whereas, your mind can be so totally different.

STUDENT: Could you also argue that may a third, that my brother and myself should be almost identical if we both have our parents' consciousness.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes. Right. Though you got different pieces at different times. Unless you are identical twins, then you must have the same mind.

ASHISH: Same pieces of the mind within each other; right.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes. And then kind of split, maybe like the ovum and sperm split into two. I'm talking about identical twins here.

Anyway, usually this is considered to be something that is totally unrealistic from a Buddhist point of view. But I was teaching a course in Germany this year, and someone said that, and I said, wouldn't the knowledge of your parents come through? The argument from that person was you don't need to have the ability to carry buckets that your father has when you get the genetic material of your father; you're not born with the same abilities that your father has just because his body had them.

But I guess it comes down to, again, watching the mind. Getting a sense that, yes, I can cut off a piece of my flesh, but can I really take a piece of consciousness and kind of — it doesn't work. The nature of consciousness is totally different. You may have more or less at a time. I like the comparison of a river that can split into six and come back together again. Right, this is some of the comparison, I've heard this analogy when our mental consciousness is always above the ground; our sense consciousnesses are sometimes below the ground, when we're asleep they're not active, when they've merged into one. There are two explanations: one is that they've gone underneath, because their continua are different. The continua of the sense consciousnesses are not the same as the mental consciousness. So they run parallel throughout our life, and at the end of our life, they dissolve. They don't really become the mental consciousness; they just dissolve.

The analogy doesn't work all the way through but it is still a sense that it remains with the same person. It is not like an exchange happens or that a person, like, loses their mind and you can get a liver transplant from another person. You can't do that with consciousness. You can't go, 'Oh, he's got his mind. Here, have a little of mine.' It doesn't work.

Therefore, I think the more that we analyze this idea that our mind can be passed on to a different person, the more that we understand consciousness through mindfulness, of course, understanding our own mind, then the more we understand that that is not a possibility.

STUDENT: I disagree. There are many heart transplant surgeries that have proven that people who get another heart change their personality totally, and transform into that person from whom they got the heart.

GESHE WANGMO: Is that a theory?

STUDENT: No, no.

GESHE WANGMO: It's incontrovertible. Do you know someone?

STUDENT: Yes.

GESHE WANGMO: Personally?

STUDENT: No.

GESHE WANGMO: That's the thing, sometimes there are these theories. Some people have theories. If it were true then everyone with heart surgery should transform into that person whether they know them or not. If that was something that if you have a piece of heart of another person you should become that person, then that should always be the case. Shouldn't it? In some cases — it is a huge

operation, huge procedure — it may transform a person. Definitely. But I'm a little skeptical, in a debate situation, arguing against it; and I may be totally wrong. But if you are saying that a piece of the person's mind is in the heart, is that true for everyone?

We have, of course, the explanation that our subtlest mind is in the heart; but that doesn't mean the organ heart which is located more towards the left. It basically means in the center of our chest where the heart chakra is located. That is a slightly different place.

It is an interesting idea; I don't want to dismiss it. I have heard that people have definitely changed, whether they become similar to the donor or not . . .

STUDENT: . . . a man who received a heart from a young man who died, and this man changed. Before the transplant he had a lot of anger, and had never written poetry, and suddenly he began writing poetry and he didn't know why. He just felt that he had to. And the young man who was the heart donor was a poet . . . and in other ways his whole personality changed.

GESHE WANGMO: All right. Could it be that some genetic material that had to do with the heart became part of the body the transplant recipient, because our genetic material keeps changing all of the time due to external circumstances; and an organ heart transplant may also lead to a change? I don't know; right.

STUDENT: What if we all come from a group consciousness? And we come again and again in a group consciousness?

GESHE WANGMO: It feels nice; right? We're never really alone. There is this idea that at the end we all become one with, like, the ocean again. It kind of feels as though we isolate ourselves as drops of water and exist on our own, but eventually we meld together again. There's no contradiction with that, because you still need an individual drop. It is not like when you have drops of water in the ocean that the drops have melded into one drop. They never do. They never do. I like the idea of the ocean, but I don't think that it literally means that we become one. Because then each drop when it becomes part of the ocean would become one drop. The ocean would be one drop.

So each drop in the ocean is still an individual drop. But they all come together in the ocean. So maybe you can compare a Buddha's mind: there's no sense of, I'm here and you're over there, which we have very strongly. We create this divide. The stronger sense of a self that I am separate that I have, the lonelier that I am.

Loneliness is such a painful emotion and it is totally mind created. It has nothing to do with physical context; because we can be even lonelier in a group of people than we would be on our own on Mt. Everest. It has nothing to do with physical isolation; it has to do with mental isolation. Anyone who feels lonely does so due a feeling that 'I am separate from everyone else.' A sense of separation.

If we feel, these are such wonderful beings. What is one of the awarenesses that necessarily needs to precede Great Compassion? Affectionate love.

Ven. Kunphen: Seeing others as close and endearing.



GESHE WANGMO: Considering other sentient beings as endearing and feeling a close to them. Right. If you consider someone to be endearing, you see them as beautiful; you automatically feel close to them. Not jealousy. We can see people as beautiful and be jealous of their beauty. That leads to loneliness. Instead, how wonderful that they have such qualities. See the beauty in each person. If you see them and sincerely rejoice, you find that person endearing and you feel close to them as you would feel close to your own children or friends, etc.

So if you have that feeling of endearment, you see the positive in them, and you are sincerely happy about that. Then automatically, there's a feeling of closeness; then how can you feel lonely? You're just part of everyone else. I'm just part of everyone; and it's not like, I'm here; and they are over there.

Loneliness is a sense of like a drop wandering off from the ocean. Or sitting in the ocean and thinking, I'm totally on my own.

Basically, I like this idea: our consciousnesses are all parts of consciousness; that is so true. But my consciousness is still different from yours. Just as each drop in the ocean is different. The continuum of each drop in the ocean is different from the continuum of other drops in the ocean.

STUDENT: I don't think so.

GESHE WANGMO: You don't think so? In the ocean?

STUDENT: No, no. How can you say that the continuum is different? It could be the same?

GESHE WANGMO: You weren't here previously. We talked about continua. The Buddhist explanation may be a little different from the ordinary presentation. We had this explanation of a former moment that gave rise to that, so a former continuum, a previous former continuum, a previous former continuum, etc. In that sense, continuum; not by being totally different as in having different characteristics.

Sometimes, I am so used to using those words; maybe, ordinarily in English, continuum has a different meaning; I don't know. I learned the word in the context of studying Buddhism. To me, continuum —

STUDENT: Mental continuum.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, mental continuum. I think of it in the Buddhist way; and sometimes, I forget other people use the word differently. We keep saying, continuum, continuum, but other people are thinking of something different. Is there any other sense in which the word continuum is used?

STUDENT: I think it is: continue, ongoing.

GESHE WANGMO: Anyway, let's continue.

20170428C09T2 - TRACK 2**PRESENTATION OF GYALTSAB JE COMMENTARY, P. 178****POSITIVE & NEGATIVE CONCOMITANCE - CAUSES & EFFECTS**

Having said this, we got to the argument, last time, saying, well if consciousness is not the result of its own former continuum, the first moment of awareness at the time of conception, if that first consciousness did not depend upon a former moment — this being the case, it has to depend upon a former moment. And then Gyaltsab Je continues by saying [p. 178, ¶15]:

It is through the ascertainment of positive and negative concomitance —

Or positive and negative relationship between a cause and its result:

that it is established that the distractedness, etc.,

So certain types of awareness that we have; naturally, we have distractedness; right? Children, OMG, if I look at my niece and nephews, they have a lot of distractedness. Try to entertain them, every two minutes you have to change. So we are born with distractedness; we have natural distractedness. This type:

. . . of awareness is generated by . . .

by its own causes which is:

. . . familiarity with its cause.

Not just their causes of distractedness but also from familiarity with those, being familiar with those. Again, this is something we need to ascertain based on our own experience. Can you think of a type of awareness that you have, and think, 'Yes, I have that type of awareness — at least from the point of view of this life — because I have accustomed myself, habituated myself with this particular awareness'?

I think she's thinking of anger, right? I mentioned this before: anger is like heroin; okay. Maybe that is a slightly extreme analogy. But it is a bit like if you meditate on not getting angry, and if you're really successful — you apply all the antidotes — if generally, you are a person who tends to get angry; and you do all the meditations and you find, 'Okay, through the antidotes applied, I've not been angry for one week.' Wow, a whole week anger free. The second week, anger free. Then something happens; someone annoys you; someone does something; and you go, 'Oh, what the heck!' and you just get really angry. Before you know, it's very easy to get angry again after that. Sometimes, it just needs one time where the former familiarity with anger reasserts itself, you fall back into it because of that one moment of familiarity.

This is how mind works. This is why meditation works. Of course, looking at it from a negative perspective, it is terrible; we can become angrier and angrier.

DORIS: Because of the seed?

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, you are right. Of course, we have the potential, the seed — Doris is using the technical term. Here the word *seed* basically means the potential to get angry; we have that potential. Therefore, having that potential, why is that potential there? Because we became familiar with anger in the past.

Therefore, here, Gyaltsab Je is saying that through understanding positive and negative concomitance — this positive and negative relationship between cause and effect.

In other words, *positive* means there is a **positive relationship between a cause and a result**:

- When you have a result, there must have been a cause.
- When you have a cause, the result can be created.

From a negative point of view:

- When you don't have the result, you didn't have the cause.
- When there's no cause, the result cannot be generated.

There is this relationship.

We're *not* saying that whenever you have a cause, you also have a result.

- Whenever you have a cause, you don't necessarily have a result.

This is important. Why? Those of you who are more familiar with philosophy: Aidan, do you know why I'm saying this? If you have a cause, you don't necessarily have a result? Why am I saying that?

Because you usually need a specific amount of causes. If you only have one of them, you don't have the remaining ones, so you don't necessarily have the result. Think of a seed. A seed is the cause of a sprout; but if you don't have a certain temperature, water, there's no way it can germinate. The seed is there. Or what can also happen is before all the causes come together, the seed is destroyed. You have the seed in one moment, but then it is destroyed. If the other conditions had come together, you potentially could've had a result, so therefore, it is called a cause as it holds the potential for the sprout; but something happened and it never arose.

The point is that if you have a cause, then the result can potentially come into existence: that is the *positive concomitance*. If you have a *result*, you know for certain its cause preceded it.

Any result always has more than one cause:

- You cannot have a result that has not arisen from many causes.
- You cannot have a cause that gives rise to only one result.

Therefore, Gyaltsab Je says [p. 178, ¶15]:

It is through the ascertainment of positive and negative concomitance that it is established that the distractedness, etc., of awareness is generated by familiarity with its cause. Were that not

to be the case, there would be a logical absurdity: it would follow that there are no causes and results, because there would be no . . .

Valid awareness, valid cognition —

. . . *pramana* that ascertains them.

Or perceives them; okay. This is an odd way of speaking.

Let me go through what I explained in the text explanation [p. 178, ¶16:

Positive and negative concomitance here denotes positive and negative concomitance with regard to a cause and its result. As mentioned before, ...

I mentioned this before in one of the handouts.

... such concomitance describes the relationship between a cause and its result.<sup>4</sup>

As I just said, when there is a cause its result can be generated by the cause; when there's a result, its cause must have preceded that result: that is the positive kind of relationship or concomitance. And negative means: when there is no cause, there is no way that a result can be generated.

Taking the example of specific awarenesses such as distractedness, . . .

This explanation is from those by Geshe and Lamas whom I listened to. Here, in particular, a Geshe mentioned other awarenesses so I added them.

. . . anger, love, open-mindedness, and so on, they are the result of having habituated one's mental continuum with their causes, because they are connected by way of positive and negative concomitance with accustoming oneself to those causes.

### ***Imprints, Potentials, Seeds & Karmic Imprints***

Basically, we are saying that the qualities of our mind are all the result of having familiarized ourselves with their causes, with their former awarenesses of a similar type that we were familiar. When you hear the English word, *imprint* [which is a translation from the Tibetan], *imprint* that comes up again and again, the word *imprint* in the Tibetan actually refers to leaving an imprint, e.g., in the snow or in the sand. This idea can mean different things, but in the context of, e.g., afflictions, we talk about *imprints* as leading to or familiarity with something. When we talk about *karmic imprints*, that is something slightly different. Actually, I think an *imprint* means a *potential*. And potential can mean so many different things, so it is very difficult — in English, we only have the word *potential*. What does that mean; it is such a vague word that can mean so many different things. The potential to get angry versus the potential to make a cake. Those are completely different potentials. Or the potential of a car to move has got nothing to do with awareness. That potential is just a matter of certain causes and conditions coming together.

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<sup>4</sup> Positive concomitance refers to the fact that when there is a cause, its result can be generated, and when there is a result, its cause must have preceded that result. Negative concomitance refers to the fact that when there is no cause, its result cannot be generated.

But in the Buddhist context, when we speak of *imprints* or *potential*, the word is *pak-cha*; and it can mean many different things.

DORIS: You use the same word for seed? But that's different.

GESHE WANGMO: Yes, it is different again. So this is where a lot of people have difficulty with talking about the seed of consciousness and the potential. What gets even more confusing is that sometimes seed and imprint mean the same thing; and sometimes they have a different meaning.

But never mind. It is only complicated from the point of view of saying, 'an awareness is active', e.g., right now, I am not angry; but yesterday, I was angry. Yesterday, my anger was manifest. But now it lies dormant; and tomorrow it arises again. This idea, 'it lies *dormant*', it lies *latent*. What does that mean? We cannot see it or feel it.

When we talk about it lying *dormant*, then we talk about it as a *seed*; this *seed* can transform into the anger again. So you establish a continuum: yesterday's anger and tomorrow's anger are connected by that *potential*, the *seed*. So it is not like you have totally disconnected anger — yesterday's and tomorrow's. No, there was the *seed* in-between; and that *seed* then becomes the anger again.

Then, yesterday's anger became a *seed*, a *potential* to arise as anger again; that is different from saying that yesterday's anger was present for one hour, and that left *imprints*, left the potential to arise just as strongly again tomorrow. That's different; that's not the same *potential*. These are different potentials. One is just to arise as anger again; the other determines the force of that. In order to differentiate those, one is called the *seed* that arises as anger again; and the other one is described as the *imprint* which — here familiarity comes in. Do you notice? Familiarity means a certain moment, let's say one hour of anger leads to a certain familiarity or a certain strength of the *imprint*, which leads to a certain amount of anger.

The *seed* of anger just leads to anger again. It doesn't determine its quality. It just determines the fact that anger arises again.

So yesterday's anger lies dormant, and just lying dormant in the form of a *seed* — instead of saying it lies *dormant*, you say, it lies there in the form of a *seed*. It was manifest before; now it is not; but it can become manifest again.

The *imprints* determine the quality. Does that make sense. So those are the *imprints*. Again, *karmic imprints* are a little different. We do not talk about *karmic imprints* as a *habit*. They are just the residues of specific actions. They are also a *potential*: the *potential* of experiencing or having a certain experience, the cause of which we created in the past. You see the word, *potential* — I run out of words. With *seed* and *imprint*, at least you have two words, but that doesn't mean it becomes much clearer.

The point is when we talk about *imprints* here, we are often speaking in the context of *familiarity*, which is important here. The more familiar we are with an awareness, the more likely it is that it arises again.

This is something you should really learn to watch. When we talk about Buddhist practice. Like I said, right now, our understanding of our own minds is very coarse. Only because we are not used to watching; we are not habituated to really watching our own mind. If you have never looked at a sailing boat, and you just have a quick glance, then if someone asks you talk about sailing boats, there's no way. I'm so unfamiliar with sailing boats. But the more you look, it's just a matter of looking again. Then you discover more and more details; right? More about its size, its functions, etc. The mind is not different. If you spend more time watching anything, the more familiar you will become with it.

There is, initially, before we started Buddhism, started engaging in the practices of Buddhism, when you hear, 'Your mind is impermanent', you are likely to disagree. There's a sense, 'No, my mind is always the same.' I got angry yesterday; I get angry today. I never change.

This is interesting: the sense that we don't change. Where does that come from? Familiarity. It is because we are so habituated to certain things and we strengthen this. We keep strengthening the familiarity: we allow it to arise again, then we form a new habit so it arises again and again and again.

It is very interesting when you start looking at your own mind. You know how we can get angry at the same person over and over and over. I quoted Jetsun Tenzin Palmo: we get so angry, most of the time, with the people we love the most; that are the closest to us. Usually, because of certain things they do, which we wouldn't even mind if someone else did them, but when they do them, we get very angry. There's a habit. We fall into this habit. We are under the control of our own mind.

Our mind just does its thing, and we're kind of carried along. It oftentimes feels that way. If it were a nice kind of carry-along, oh, compassion, love, we'd be very blissfully carried away. But the problem, of course, is that a lot of suffering is created in the process of all of these negative afflictions and the constant habituation with them.

### ***Habituating Ourselves with the Afflictions***

Sometimes it is fear. Fear is also a big part: we're scared of something. Instead of understanding the fear, we strengthen it again and again. When it arises, there's fear of the fear, which makes the fear stronger, because we push it away; instead of just acknowledging the fear and allowing it to be, so it will fade on its own, we try to push it away and it gets stronger. Or we may try to distract ourselves so it disappears for awhile, but it comes back quickly.

What are other examples? Self-hatred. Not liking — self-hatred doesn't mean I hate everything about myself at all times. No, no. When it is about the bigger piece of cake, I consider myself more important; I love myself in that moment. But there are other moments when I fail, when I don't do the things I expect of myself, and I'm angry with myself. I'm not a good Buddhist practitioner because I'm not patient! And I get really angry with myself.

**For the sake of others, we have a responsibility to be happier.**

Guilt is also a good example. In the West, were so good with guilt. I never realized, I mean, when I was in Israel last year, a lady said to me — I had talked about how really important it is to be happy. It is a responsibility that we have, because the happier we are, the better we are with others. We have a responsibility just for the sake of others to be happier and calmer. She said to me, 'Sometimes there's a feeling of guilt when the people around you are suffering. You feel like you don't deserve to be happy.' I thought, what a bizarre idea. If you are caught in that, then you don't want to be happy. Then you're miserable, and everyone around you is miserable. Then you're just a Club of the Miserable.

Actually, it's a bizarre idea, and I think it is very Western. Guilt is a habit we hold. In Tibetan, I've mentioned on a few occasions that, really, there's no word for *guilt*, as such. They use a word, but they don't use it in the way that we do. It kind of means, *regret* or feeling bad about what you did. Not that kind of *carrying with you* kind of guilt. The carrying with you kind of guilt comes from a sense of permanence: I have made a mistake. For instance, I failed to do something; and I carry that failure to do something with me. I remind myself, again and again. It's done! The failure to do something ten years ago, that failure is done; get on with it. Never mind, you're not the same person. But there's a sense of permanence; we hold onto it. I did this. It's almost like it is still in your face; only because we're so familiar with bringing it to mind again and again as if it were still there. It's no longer there. Let it go; let it slide. It's impermanent. The past is past.

**Positive Counterpart to Each Negative Emotional Affliction**

So the positive counterpart to guilt is regret. I made a mistake; okay. That was wrong. If I could turn back time, I would change it; but I cannot. In the future, I will try not to do it. That's healthy and necessary. It's good to go back and think, 'Okay. I made a mistake'; be kind of logical about it; and then try to change in the future. That's in accord with reality. What is done is done; I feel sorry; if necessary, I apologize; but I move on, try to make it up if I can or at least try not to make the same mistake again. That's the positive counter-force. The negative one is guilt.

In that way, every affliction — even anger has a positive counterpart. This is not okay; it should not be done; I will do something myself. Strength of mind; or seeing it as negative, without getting upset about it and trying to change something. Make changes.

Attachment: seeing the positive in something and working towards acquiring, maybe, the same quality, etc.

Each affliction is just an extreme version of the positive counterpart, but we need to recognize that. Where, in my case, am I caught in that extreme negativity? The usual ones are: anger, attachment, jealousy, arrogance. But for Westerners, we need to add a few: self-hatred, guilt, fear. Fear of the future; that is so funny, really. Fear of the future: what a waste of time! Whatever we are scared of, first of all, we don't even know if will happen. It could happen: a stone could fall on my head. It could, that's true. But I don't know whether it will; and if it does, what is the worst that could happen, I'll die. Okay, I'll be reborn. Seriously; right. It's

going to be a temporary problem; and the good thing is there are future lives, so if I die from a hole in my head, maybe I'll be a vegetable for awhile, and then it has an end.

The things we worry about in the future are very unlikely to happen. We're not scared of the past. We are scared of the future. Our fears mostly have to do with the future. If we're scared of the past, usually, because we're scared about what could be done to us: maybe they'll expose our negative qualities, get angry with us, beat us up; whatever.

Of course, fear, I'm not talking about the positive counterforce. There can, of course, be something harmful, so we should avoid it and try to remedy it, if we can. If we can't, the worst is that will be killed and reborn.

I just wanted to make this point in terms of *habituation*. So to work with your own mind, become more aware of your own habits. How, so many times, stuff comes up. Oh, what I love is having a bad mood. Having a bad mood: seriously, your bad moods become less with Buddhist practice. In fact, you can say, you don't suffer from bad moods anymore.

Surely, sometimes it gets like, you've got a belly ache and so forth, but the type of bad mood without any reason, you wake up and everything is dark. That kind of bad mood stops happening; after awhile it fades away, I think, to some degree.

Why? Because what is that bad mood? Again, it is caused by something underlying. It's not like it is just something out-of-the-blue, you have a bad mood. It is a habit. It is something happening in your mind that you're not aware of, a kind of anger, a kind of feeling of failure that you can't admit to yourself; you feel like you've failed at something; you've not been good enough; something is underneath it. Here, again, it is so important to look: what kind of habit is at play, right now? Is it a sense that I have to be better than I am? Is it a sense that my failure is worse than my neighbor's, because I'm a little bit more important? Right.

A lot of self-hatred is really that (inverted conceit; perfectionism). A lot of our self-hatred, and our feeling of we're less than others, *low self-esteem*, actually comes from a sense that we are so important that we should not make mistakes. We cannot forgive ourselves for our own failures to the same degree that we can forgive our friends or relatives for their failures; right. We're very good at saying, 'It doesn't matter. Everyone makes mistakes.' But, 'not me!'

The first step is to accept who we are: it's okay. I'm a samsaric being; what do I expect. I'm in Samsara; I have self-grasping; come on!' There's room for improvement, so if I make a mistake, move on. Okay. Pick yourself up, instead of lying there, 'Oh.' That leads to a bad mood because of this habit, 'I did this. I did that.' Can't let go, so that leads to familiarity and you familiarize yourself with this kind of dark mood because you're caught in that fog. Each moment, you reinforce it; you reinforce it.

That is what you do when you practice Mindfulness. You try to find the cause. Where am I. Why am I doing this? A very good thing is to be able to laugh about yourself. Look at your own mind and see it as hilarious. It is so funny what is



happening in our own mind. Really, if you look at your own mind, the stories, the self-grasping attitude. But that's not us. I mean, there's the self-grasping attitude; but there's also compassion. We don't need to identify so much with the self-grasping attitude, while thinking that the compassion is just temporary. They're all coming and going at times. So to just laugh about it: Oh, look at the self-grasping: how it's doing its thing. Oh, look at the jealousy: how interesting. I can learn from that. Anger, today, I have an opportunity to get to know my anger better. With a sense of humor, being able to laugh at yourself.

Look at the Lamas. Oftentimes they have an uncanny ability to laugh about themselves. They don't take themselves as seriously as we sometimes do.

This is all important. Watching the mind. Watching the mind. Watching the mind. The more you do so, the more familiar you become with it and the more you are able to stop when the bad mood sets in; just lighten it up. It makes it easier to put things into perspective.

I keep telling that to my Mom. My Mom is so good at focusing in on one tiny thing, and forgetting the entire rest. Well, I'm good at that too, but it's much easier to see my Mom doing it. She calls me every now in, 'A pipe broke; OMG.' That was the latest. I said, 'But the pipe only broke in this room. You have 16 other rooms where there's no broken pipe. Your car didn't break. You can walk.' After I presented her with a list, she said, 'Yeah, it's not that bad.' And I thought, 'Oh, if it works that well with my mom, I should remind myself.' If something terrible happens, but I have two legs and two arms; I can see; I can eat; I don't have diarrhea; I have a room, a visa; I know where I can get my food tomorrow. So there's a whole list of things instead of just zooming in on that one thing.

It is habit. It is a habit we have. Some scientists say that this is because in order for us to get better as a human race, we needed to learn — when we were in the caves, whatever, it was important to focus in on the negative and not to be too complacent about the positive. Okay. But that's past. We're no longer in caves.

Another example, why do we want, certain things that were necessary when you were in a cave that are no longer needed now. So focusing on the negative maybe was necessary back then, it is no longer necessary now.

Another example is when you have to go to the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of a building, there are stairs and an elevator. You want to go on the elevator. Scientists say that's because when you were in a cave, you had to preserve your energy. There's a natural sense, let's preserve my energy. But now, we know, this is not a good idea: take the staircase.

Other examples, we have the habit of wanting to eat sweet foods because when we were in those caves, etc., at that time, the genetic material that we inherited from those times gives us the urge to eat sweets, because those are foods full of energies. We don't need that any longer. We should not give into our urges to eat sweet things or to take the elevator or to focus on fear.

These are often the arguments I hear in the West. People say to focus on the negative has an evolutionary cause. Okay. Eating sweet things has an evolutionary

cause; that doesn't make it right. Just to be happier. And I've mentioned a few times, I've seen it work. I've been so happy to have Tibetan classmates, some things were challenging; but that part, their ability to always see the positive in things. You see it done right in front of you. Something terrible happens, and they're like, 'Well, but . . .', and then they put it into perspective, and they don't get depressed. Oh, yeah, there's a problem, a relative died, but I still have many other relatives; it is just part of life. And that's it, they've moved on.

My favorite example, since I talk of my classmates — a terrible habit that we have as Westerners. Gilah is smiling; she knows what I'm going to talk about. Something that comes from our Western upbringing is our competitiveness; jealousy. Again, I grew up in a very competitive society. I should say that competitiveness is actually not a problem. Competitiveness is the positive counterpart, in the sense that, 'Oh, someone is doing well. I can do that, too.' Then it encourages us to work harder; and even if I don't compare myself, but: 'I didn't do too well yesterday; but I can do better in the future' — that kind of comparing myself. That is a positive kind.

But if we take it to the extreme of disliking another person's success, being unhappy or resentful towards the other person's success, and wanting it for ourselves, jealousy. Jealousy is a terrible emotion that is very painful. Anger is not as painful. I think jealousy is the most painful negative emotion, the one that makes you the most miserable. Can you think of another one that is more painful? Because anger, if you beat someone up, and you feel regret once you realize what you've done, that's painful. But when the actual anger is there, that doesn't feel painful. Attachment seems to benefit me: thinking of the object of my attachment. In that moment it actually seems to benefit me; arrogance, also. But jealousy is painful. Right there.

The most powerful antidote is rejoicing. Like I said, with my classmates, not only did I learn how, in a negative situation, to put things into perspective and look at all the good stuff in my life. But they also showed me sincere rejoicing. They had a habit of rejoicing. Something they wanted very much for themselves, when they observed this in another person, they went, 'Oh, how wonderful! That's so wonderful for them! I'm so happy.' And I said, 'Wait. Are you really happy?' I was skeptical initially. 'I know you wanted this so much; and now someone else close to you has it. Are you really happy; or are you just pretending?' Then I realized, they were not disturbed; they were just as peaceful as before. In fact, they were really happy. I thought, 'OMG, how clever.' How much more happiness you can have if you aren't just happy about your own success but about everyone else's! Right. You work as hard as you usually do. And then you have much more happiness, because if you're not successful, well, someone else is. How nice. How wonderful.

The only reason we have this jealousy is habit. We grew up in a society that, through commercials — commercials are so clever. I have the highest respect for those clever people who give these messages. I have respect. I'm in awe at how they influence us. But it is also good to watch both: how they influence our mind. How these commercials suggest things that we take on subconsciously. Again, it is all about *watching*; watching the commercial. They're trying to tell me that if I use this washing powder, I'm going to live in a white house with a lovely husband; my

children will always be happy; there'll be butterflies outside the window; blue sky. All that is suggested to accompany your use of their washing powder.

So it is quite important to become aware that we associate those. Of course, on an even subtler level, sex, if there's the word sex somewhere, your consciousness may pick it up only subconsciously. I read a study where some psychologists showed computer images to the subject's right eye and images to the left eye. They showed flashes of colors and shapes. On the right side they showed the flashes so quickly interspersed with images of an angry person; but the images were so quick, they didn't register, couldn't be seen. On the left side, they just showed colors and shapes. They checked the subjects' brains and found that fear was generated. There was fear generated in the brain and the person didn't even know about it. Because they didn't see the images. So on a subconscious level, our awareness picked it up, did perceive it on a subtle level and activated a fear response in our brain that we're not aware of. So it is important, with all of these influences around us — how many times when we walk through a city, we see commercials that we have no idea how they are influencing. Mindfulness that is the answer to this. Am I being influenced. Why do I have a sense that if I have that, I'll be happier? Is it because of the lady with the butterflies in the commercial? Just to find out.

Because our attachments are limitless and we spend our entire life running after happiness. Although, rationally we know, it doesn't bring us long-lasting happiness. Instinctively, we feel that it will. That's why we are in Samsara. We're like prisoners with an open door. We could walk out any time. But we're facing away from the door, looking inside the prison. Liberation is right there. But we are so caught. We still believe that we find happiness in Samsara. Just watch your own mind. Oh, yeah, Enlightenment, but before that I want — right. Enlightenment, yeah, okay, that's kind of on the end of my list. It's kind of great.

That is why it is so hard to get anywhere. Because really, Enlightenment is at the bottom of the list. It is this and that, all material things, reputation, fame, whatever. We just don't know. 'Oh, Buddhist practice doesn't help. It doesn't really work, because I'm not really improving.' Yeah, because we're so busy being attached to this, that and the other. We're attached to our Lama. We're attached to what have you. We carry our attachment over.

This is why Jetsun Tenzin Palmo once said it so beautifully. She talked to nuns in this context, but it is so true for anyone. If you become a nun, it is not like you put on these robes and suddenly you're a different person. You're exactly the same person. There's an odd expectation that if you shave your head, put on different clothes, things will be easier. No, no. Same mind; can't escape it.

No matter where we go, Dharma center, mountains, caves, New York City, the problem is our mind; it is not the noise. But we just don't get it. It doesn't feel that way.

I've been chatting, but I just want to stress this.

20170428C09T3 - TRACK 3**PRESENTATION OF DHARMAKIRTI & COMMENTARY, P. 179*****Familiarity with Afflictive Mental States requires former Mental Continuum***

So let's read through this. It is easy, *Familiarity with its causes*. How familiar are we with the causes of anger, distractedness, attachment, etc. Anyway, going back to this [p. 178, ¶18]:

<sup>5</sup>They are connected in this way in this way . . .

So these different awarenesses are connected *in this way, i.e.*, with familiarity, with their causes:

. . . since those mental states manifest owing to past familiarity with their causes; . . .

They only arise because of those.

. . . had one not accustomed oneself with their causes, they could not arise.

Positive and negative concomitances.

. . . Thus, it is through habituation with distractedness, anger, etc., in the past that they now arise in our mental continuum.

We can't blame our parents. We like to do that. We look for causes of our problems; but oftentimes, we try to find them in our childhood, etc. But the main causes are to be found in our own consciousness.

. . . They manifested in our continuum even when we were small children, for we had familiarized ourselves with them in past lives.

Okay. Sometimes, we say, well, it's the genetic material we got. In that case, we don't blame our parents, because they didn't really pick and choose. This ovum is for this son; that didn't happen. But we blame the genetic material. Well, why do we have this genetic material?

Sometimes we reverse cause and effect. We believe that the genetic material is the cause of our mental qualities. Actually, it is our mental qualities that are the cause for having the genetic material in this lifetime which then perpetuates that tendency of, e.g., getting angry. Maybe there's an anger gene or whatever. Of course, these days, scientists know that the genetic material is not as rigid, unchanging as they initially believe. Due to the understanding of neuroplasticity, they've found that you can be 80 years old, meditate, and your mind changes, your brain changes, all the time. It is not like we're born with a certain material that we carry on until we die; there's constant change. We're born with a certain genetic material; but that is not responsible for our mind. The kind of awareness we have comes from a previous

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<sup>5</sup> Taking the example of specific awarenesses such as distractedness, anger, love, open-mindedness, and so on, they are the result of having habituated one's mental continuum with their causes, because they are connected by way of positive and negative concomitance with accustoming oneself to those causes.

life and that is responsible for the genetic material we have. As our mind continues, then there are changes. Which is why, when they did tests on meditators, on Mingyur Rinpoche — I was just reading and I must refresh my German. The only German book I could get was this book on scientific tests with Mingyur Rinpoche. Not that I'm greatly satisfied with that book; it was very interesting.

Anyway, it talks about how Mingyur Rinpoche's brain is so different from others' because of the incredible training he's done. With meditation, you practice mindfulness meditation long enough, your body will change. And since we live in the material world, I think that's a very good advertisement strategy for telling people to meditate, 'you'll be healthier.' People spend a lot of money on organic food. Maybe people are more inclined to meditate when they know how much healthier you can be through the mind calming the body and making it healthier.

Anyway [p. 178-9, ¶19]:

However, if one were to assert that distractedness, anger, etc., are not generated by familiarity with their causes, the following absurdity would occur:

This is what Gyaltsab Je is saying.

... it would follow that these awarenesses come into existence without depending on a cause. ...

If that is not their cause, well, then they don't depend on a cause; because that is their main cause.

... If distractedness, anger, and so forth were to arise without depending on a cause, whatever is an impermanent phenomenon could come into existence without being generated by a cause. If that were possible, it would follow that there are *no* phenomena that relate to one another as cause and result.

Remember, this was the argument before.

... This is because there would be no valid cognizer ...

No valid awareness.

... realizing such.

I put footnote 83 there because that last reason seemed to be out of place; right? That last reason, where does that come from. The only footnote on page 179:

The reason, "this is because there would be no valid cognizer realizing such", indicates the relationship between a phenomenon and a valid cognizer realizing the phenomenon.

We had that in the past. This is pretty much the basis of Buddhist philosophy:

If something exists, it can be known; and if it is known, it exists.

That concept. I'm not talking about knowing a flying cow, because you can't know a flying cow. You can only imagine it, at least in this world. The point here is that the relationship between: something only exists if there is a valid cognizer, a valid awareness, that realizes it; and if it is not — this doesn't mean that I have to realize

it — in general, if it is not realized, it cannot exist. So that is expressed, that relationship is expressed by this reason. It:

... indicates the relationship between a phenomenon and a valid cognizer realizing the phenomenon. As explained before, 'that which is realized by a valid cognizer' and 'that which exists' are synonymous. Hence, if something is realized by a valid cognizer, it necessarily exists; and if it is not realized by a valid cognizer, it does not exist.

This is why, . . .

Here, the argument, how do we get there?

... , if distractedness, anger, etc., were not the results of familiarity with their causes, there would be no valid cognizer realizing that these awarenesses are the results of familiarity with their causes. If there were no such valid cognizers, it would follow that there are no valid cognizers realizing that a result depends on a cause. Therefore, there would be no causes and results, because there would be no valid cognizers realizing such.

So just to be able to follow this argument that, on first reading seems a little bit — where is the logic in that. But it is saying what is the main cause of our mental qualities? Familiarity. If that were not the case, if the main cause of familiarity did not give rise to those, there would be no cause of anything. And nothing would depend upon causes.

Then [p. 179, ¶2]:

[Dharmakirti says in the *Pramanavarttika*:]

Then Dharmakirti says in the next sentence, after this whole argumentation, presenting those syllogisms, as presented before, in the first moment of consciousness, or in the first moment — let's take awareness. So the first moment of awareness in a newly conceived being, it depends on the former moment of awareness, because it is consciousness. Right?

### HAVING ESTABLISHED NECESSITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS CONTINUUM FROM PAST LIVES AS SUBSTANTIAL CAUSE FOR PRESENT LIFE'S AWARENESS, ESTABLISHING FUTURE LIVES

Therefore, Dharmakirti says [p. 179, ¶3]:

*They are not generated by the body alone,*

Here, [*beginning Gyaltsab Je's commentary*], the *Also* is a little out of place. Actually, it should be *Therefore*. But I translated it the way it is usually translated:

Also, regarding that subject, . . .

The subjects before, respiration, sense powers. If you have the word that in Tibetan, you look for what was mentioned before. In English that can be a little bit misleading. So:

. . . **they are not generated by the elemental body alone**, because they are generated by an earlier [continuum of] an awareness, etc., that is of a similar type.

So:

Having established above that the subject, a newly-born . . .

Or a *newly conceived* — I still use the same word, *newly-born* which means *newly conceived* in this context; just to remind you: *being born in a womb*; not being born from a womb. *In a womb* here is the moment of conception. So: So:

. . . , a newly-born ordinary being's exhalations and inhalations, his sense powers, and his awarenesses such as distractedness, etc., are generated by earlier continuums of a similar type (thus establishing the existence of past lives), . . .

If you understand, you understand past lives. If you understand that an awareness must have been preceded by a former moment of the same continuum, then you understand past lives. And here we continue, it's not our parents. So let's not blame our parents for our anger; it's not like their anger came over like a piece came off that was the anger, or something. We get a totally kind of *clean sheet* awareness from our parents, but then we've been angry since we were very little. That would contradict that. This argument I said earlier: if we got a piece of our parents' minds, but that was just a clean sheet, then we should not even be angry as children. Watch little children sometimes. One child is much more calm, more patient, while another one is much more distracted, etc. From the Buddhist point of view, it is not the parents; it's a continuum of an awareness.

So after this argumentation:

Dharmakirti concludes: regarding a newly-born ordinary being's exhalations and inhalations, etc., . . .

Or the potential to be able to breathe is what he really means, respiration:

. . . , they are not generated by the physical body alone – as some non-Buddhist philosophers hold – because they are the substantial results of their earlier continuums.

Okay. Just saying, so therefore, concluding, not created by the body alone. The body may serve as a cooperative condition; it is not the substantial cause of the awareness.

### **Respiration**

Then there's this whole explanation that I already gave to you in the last class. It is an explanation with regard to *exhalation* and *inhalation*. We talk about respiration. A newly-conceived being doesn't have any respiration, so what are you saying? The respiration of a newly-conceived being, it was preceded by its own former continuum? Well, there is no respiration at that time; which is why some scholars explain that it is just the *potential* to be able to breathe. It is difficult to say, when does the respiration stop? When we die; ordinary respiration stops when we die. And when we are reborn, when does it resume? After birth from the womb; so there is this time gap in-between.

Here, what Dharmakirti is saying is that the potential to breathe is there, because to be able to breathe as a living being — I'm not talking about the kind of respiration,

e.g., that we find in a tree, because here, the exchange, the breathing can be faster or slower, there's a certain rhythm; and that is due to an awareness. As I mentioned before, there is a type of effort that we are not aware of; but if that effort is not present, we wouldn't be breathing. E.g., if we are in a coma, and the mind becomes too subtle, then the breathing can't take place. People in a coma are not able to breathe on their own, so the mind has to become so subtle that it is similar to the mind in dying. When the breathing stops, you are not necessarily dead yet from a Buddhist point of view; the moment you stop breathing is not the moment of your death. It depends upon how quickly you die. If you die suddenly in an accident, it can be that you stop breathing and shortly afterwards you are actually dead. But if you die slowly, according to the explanation of what happens to consciousness — how it grows subtler and subtler — there are different stages, eight stages, etc., that are described. And during one of those stages, you stop breathing but you are still not dead. In other words, your consciousness is still not subtle enough. So at some point, when the awareness has grown too subtle — I'm not talking about the subtlest type of awareness; that hasn't manifested yet. A coarser type of awareness is active, and then you can no longer breathe. If you are in a coma, that means that your awareness has become so subtle — it is probably one of those stages before the subtle Clear Light Mind, but more subtle than when you are asleep. It is a deeper state than state, and you don't breathe, and you need to have artificial respirator to survive.

KEN: What is the difference between coma and artificial respiration? You can be breathing on your own in a coma.

GESHE WANGMO: But there are some comas, where you cannot.

KEN: There are some; and that's usually when there's artificial respiration by some mechanical means.

GESHE WANGMO: So there are different levels of coma. The deeper you are in a coma — just to explain it from the Buddhist perspective, they go hand in hand. So I am glad that Ken mentions this. There are different types of coma: there's the type where your consciousness is not subtle enough, so you can still breathe. In other words, it means that there is a certain type of effort that is necessary to keep us breathing which can function to a certain degree of subtlety; but once you go beyond that, it can no longer function. The good news is, e.g., certain afflictions can only function on a certain coarse level; on a subtle level, e.g., with the Clear Light Mind, there's no way to get angry. It is such a subtle mind, which is why in tantra it explains that you use that subtle mind for meditation. That's one reason. In such a powerful and non-obstructed mind that you cannot get carried away by an angry Clear Light Mind; that just doesn't happen.

ASHISH: So 50-years ago we didn't have breathing machines.

GESHE WANGMO: No, we just died.

ASHISH: So now, conceivably, we could have machines that keep us alive forever. Does that mean that the consciousness never stops?



GESHE WANGMO: Are you asking some kind of SyFy question? You are right. I wondered about that the other day. There was a report about a lady who wanted to be frozen after her death; right.

I can just give a Buddhist explanation. That is correct. The kind of karma that propelled us into this lifetime comes with a certain limit. Actually, from a Buddhist point of view, I don't know whether that your karma may have ripened so that you can live longer. Actually, the human karma generally comes with a certain life span; and you can die before that due to another karma that serves as an obstacle; and therefore, you die earlier. But if there's no obstacles to your longevity, you have enough merit to survive in this human birth, then you will to the end of the life spans together with this propelling karma that propelled you into this lifetime. And then even if they keep you alive, what they keep alive is a body. They artificially keep a body alive; so if you were to wait until there's a cure for cancer, I think, they cure the person of cancer and they're still dead.

I mean, if that is really true. I don't know. This is just — I have no way of proving this; I'm convinced that this is the case. I would say that even if you freeze yourself before you are dead, and they thaw your body, then you are dead. Even if they'd found a cure for wrinkles and everything, you're dead. You're gone. You're in a different body.

ASHISH: But if your body and mind are alive, . . .

GESHE WANGMO: No, your mind isn't. Your mind has moved on; it's left the body.

ASHISH: Is that your mind or your consciousness? Because the mind is tied to your body. If your body is being kept alive now.

GESHE WANGMO: Even so, if the karmic link is exhausted, your mind will leave the body; there's no mind in the body, even if it looks like the person is 'kept alive' in the sense of the blood and oxygen. You can keep a body *alive* even if the person is dead.

ASHISH: In this case, you're saying the mind is separate from the body?

GESHE WANGMO: It has separated, yes.

ASHISH: But not the consciousness?

GESHE WANGMO: Mind and consciousness are the same thing. How is there a contradiction from everything we've said. I said earlier on that the mind can be born into a body, there's karmic link and then there's a strong connection. But when that connection is gone, you leave the body.

ASHISH: I guess I'm just not seeing the connection between the body and the mind having been broken if you're being kept alive artificially?

GESHE WANGMO: Well, if there is no more mind in the body, the mind is gone. Because if you stopped the breathing machine, actually if there was still consciousness, and you cured the person of whatever keeps their mind from being more coarse — if you had a way to arouse them from their coma, they should be able to breathe on their own again. But if the consciousness is gone; that's it.

STUDENT: But that doesn't mean the consciousness is gone; it's a subtle mind?

GESHE WANGMO: I'm saying, *if we keep the person alive for 10,000 years, let's say in the Future. Or ten years after they've actually passed on. I'm not saying that everyone who is in a coma is dead. They could still be present; they can be in a coma for ten years, and the subtle awareness is present; and then the projecting karma is exhausted, and the mind leaves the body. And no one is aware of when that happened. They were 15 years in a coma; but after 10 years, they'd already left the body. And the family is still waiting. It is possible. Or it is possible they were already gone right from the beginning. No, no. I think in coma patients, if there is still some brain activity, I think that is used to determine. If there's no longer any brain activity. Here, the question would be, just respiration on its own doesn't mean the person is still alive. You would have to see whether there's any brain activity. If there's no longer brain activity, that doesn't mean the person is dead, because this is one of the things that stops while you're dying. But I don't think the coarser consciousness can grow back so that there is brain activity again. I think once you're clinically dead — I don't know. Anyway, we don't need to go into this. I'm sorry. I'm so used to being on the debate ground, and we debate about anything; but maybe in a classroom that's not the right thing. I'm not sure. It is still good to look at it from all of these different angles to analyze and reflect on whether or not the scriptures are correct.*

**Reading for next class:**

Please read this on your own, as we've basically done this, so we don't need to go over it again. Then continue on page 181. Everything on the next two pages, I've already discussed in class, page 179 and, in particular, the tantric explanation about subtle wind energy on page 180.

**END NOTE**

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<sup>A</sup> The three syllogisms:

- (a) *Regarding the subject, a newly born being's exhalations and inhalations, they do not – when that being has fully taken birth – exist independently of earlier continuums of a similar type, because they are exhalations and inhalations.*
- (b) *Regarding the subject, a newly-born ordinary being's lucid sense powers, they do not – when that being has fully taken birth – exist independently of earlier continuums of a similar type, because they are sense powers.*
- (c) *Regarding the subject, a newly-born ordinary being's specific awarenesses, such as his distractedness, they do not – when that being has fully taken birth – exist independently of earlier continuums of a similar type, because they are awarenesses.*