

Ven. Robina Courtin
Karma (Unedited)
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Introduction

Okay. So let's think. Think. Because everything comes down to thoughts, for the Buddha. Think: I'm sitting here, going to listen to a few of the Buddha's ideas, about happiness, about suffering, about the human mind, about what causes things; Buddha's view in other words, about the world. And why are we listening to this? What's the point? So that we can take some tools from this and use in our own life to help develop our astonishing potential, and even in turn, why this? So we can help others. Finally, this is the bottom line, put into action.

So compassion is the point -- just thinking this -- compassion is the point. But as His Holiness says, 'Compassion is not enough. We need wisdom.' So that's why we have to listen to the teachings, to listen to Buddha's views, so we can internalize that, develop ourselves. Then we're qualified to help others all the way to enlightenment. So we just express this motivation in this little prayer that we can sing -- the second two lines expressing this motivation. The first two lines are reminding us of our reliance on the Buddha, on his methods and his teachings.

(Refuge Prayers chanted in Tibetan)

And then for auspiciousness, it's really good that we offer, make an offering to the Buddha, as if he were here himself giving these teachings. So we offer something in order to receive something. So we can imagine offering all the marvelous things of this world, piling them up on this imaginary offering we give, imagining it, all these marvelous things we offer to the Buddha as a request for the teachings.

(Mandala Offering chanted in Tibetan)

And then we can sing the seven limbs for auspiciousness: prostrating, making offerings, acknowledging negativity, delighting in virtue, requesting the holy beings to teach, requesting them to stay among us until samsara ends, and dedicating all of this to sentient beings.

(Seven Limb Prayer chanted in Tibetan)

The Appropriate way to listen to the Teachings

04:39

So, just to remind us, whether we've heard this never before, or whether we've heard these things a thousand times, just reminding ourselves of the appropriate way to listen.

If this were cooking class, we wouldn't be coming just to listen to praise about cakes. How boring... Just having four hours of praise of cakes or three hours is not helpful. We need some practical advice. We need some recipes. We need to know how to make cakes, don't we? We need to be inspired to want to make cakes, but we finally have to know *how* to make cakes. So that means what we're listening to has to be instructions. And then we all know, from recipes, even to make a cake, you've got to be accurate. So then usually, we have a notebook, and a pen. Or we take the tape later, and get the instructions, otherwise you won't get a cake. But our trouble is sometimes when we listen to spiritual teachings, we don't think of it this way. We just think of it as something kind of interesting, something to believe in, something mystical, which is really inappropriate. Finally, Buddha's advice is just that -- advice about how to lead your life. And more fundamentally, how to change our minds. How to work on our own minds, be our own therapist, as Lama Yeshe puts it. That's where the advice is. That's where the recipes are. That's where the workshop is, as Lama Zopa Rinpoche says, 'in the mind'. So listen to it as advice. Now of course, you don't have to take it...no one's forcing. But that's the point, you know? So if you can't take it, you leave it alone, that's okay. But if there's one percent of what you hear that you could put into practice, then that's fantastic. That's the point.

So the other thing, the second thing to remember -- again and again to remember this -- is that Buddha is not a creator. Therefore in general terms you could say there's no concept in Buddhism of blindly believing something. That's just not the point. You know, we're so used to spiritual teachings being a belief system, you know. And of course, HHDL uses that word, 'cause it's the general term people use. But if we look at it carefully, you know, Buddha is a person who is more similar to a scientist, insofar as he's presenting his findings. And he's not saying we should believe him and indeed, he's not forcing us to go and do it. He's simply presenting his findings, obviously from his own direct experience. It isn't speculation. He didn't have a vision of it. It wasn't, kind of, revealed to him by somebody -- which is how we think of religion. And it's necessarily something, therefore, that if we want to, we can put into practice in our own lives. It's something that's do-able. It has to be, you know. This is a really important point to remember. Because we get intellectually very lazy when we listen to spiritual teachings. So we're inspired by hearing somebody, we're excited, you know. We think we believe in it. 'I believe in karma.' Well, it has nothing to do with belief. I'd have to say, in my own life, I don't use that word at all. So the better word to use, you know, if you think about it carefully, is- this is the Buddha's approach- you take it as your hypothesis. You have it as your working hypothesis. And that's reasonable. Any decent scientist would do that.

The Teachings as 'Working Hypothesis'

08:42

So, obviously, if something is your 'working hypothesis', you're working with it. And what you're doing is you're slowly putting into practice, and what you're doing is verifying it, aren't you. This is the result. You're not just leaving it in your head. It has to be put into practice. And then you will find out for yourself whether it is valid. So, when you learn 'one and one is two', your teacher says, 'Go home and do your homework.' What she wants you to do is intellectually

understand it so that finally, experientially, you can know it as the truth. It's all very fine -- you can learn your 'ten times tables' -- that's a good start -- but to merely leave it at belief level -- that you just 'know' them, but you don't know how to tell someone how to add up 'one and one is two' it's not so helpful. You've got to understand it yourself. It's got to be your experience. You have got to verify it as the truth. This is the approach in Buddhism. As His Holiness says, 'If you can, from your own direct experience, actually prove that something the Buddha says is wrong, you must reject him.'

So this is a really important point. This is the bottom line of practice. It's not just belief. It's really -- that's intellectual laziness. And that's a really important point to make -- we don't think this way in religion. You take it as your hypothesis.

Karma -- The Fundamental Point / The Workshop is in the Mind

10:00

Okay. The fundamental point -- we're going to talk about karma -- which is really the fundamental philosophy of the Buddha. If we're saying we're a Buddhist and we're attempting to practice Buddhism, if we're not applying the laws of karma, if we're not taking that as our hypothesis, if we're not applying that in our daily life, we're not really being a Buddhist. This is really the distinguishing characteristic of Buddhist teachings, you know -- his view about the world, how it comes into being, what our mind is, what causes happiness, what causes suffering, et cetera, et cetera. It's this, you know, the law of cause and effect.

So, this law applies -- runs -- in the mind. So the mind, for the Buddha, is where things happen. The mind is where the workshop is. The mind is where everything happens. The mind is where the source of suffering is. The mind is where the source of happiness is. So, the mind is the point. So, knowing about the mind, as far as Buddha's concerned, and knowing about the law of karma -- these are -- I mean I just call it this myself, these are my own words -- like the 'two pillars', you know, these are fundamental. If we can't get our head around these -- it's fine, it's fine to be mindful, it's fine to watch your breath, it's fine to be a good person, it's fine to practice compassion, but they're not the essential points. You could say the result is compassion, of all of this. Finally you put your money where your mouth is, and you benefit others. But all of this is the 'nuts and bolts' of how you get there, validly.

What is the Mind?

11:18

So, okay. If the mind is the point, if the mind is where the workshop is, as Rinpoche says, what is the mind? Because we have clearly very different views on what the mind is than our materialist world and these are the views that are totally common to us all, totally the default mode for most of us and even if we're Buddhist, we still tend to talk about the mind in a materialist way. So, when we say the word 'mind' we point to the brain, don't we? We assume it's something physical. We assume it comes from mummy and daddy. If we talk about 'spiritual', we would normally talk about a creator, 'God', and we talk about a soul, which is given to us by God. Well, Buddha doesn't argue that your

parents gave you a brain; but his point is your brain isn't your mind. It plays a good role; there are a lot of indicators in the brain of what goes on in our world; but it's not the mind itself -- that's the crucial thing. So indeed, don't believe it, just take it as our working hypothesis, like I said. So, your consciousness is not physical, first. Works interdependently and very nicely with the brain -- you need a decent, working brain; a decent, working body; a decent, working nervous system. But the mind itself is not the brain. The mind is something not physical.

Secondly, it's a word, synonymous with the word 'consciousness', that's used to refer to all of your thoughts and feelings and emotions and unconscious and all this business, you know. This is your mind.

The third point, and this is shocking to us -- we have to keep remembering this -- it doesn't come from anyone else. And this is fundamental to all of Buddha's philosophical presentation of the universe. This is a fundamental point. It doesn't come from anyone else. Our mind is not given to us. In other words, we're not created by somebody. Our mummy and daddy give us a body -- very kind! But our mind, our thoughts, our feelings, our emotions do not come from someone else. Our mind is our own. This is fundamental to understanding Buddhism. Fundamental. And absolutely crucial, fundamental, crucial, to one's own day-to-day practice.

Where Do I Come From?

13:36

So, the question of course, is demanded, 'if I'm not created by somebody else, where do I come from?' Our big question -- 'Who am I? Where do I come from?' Well, in a simple sense, this boring answer is you come from previous moments of yourself. Your mind, at this moment in time -- you think of it as a river of mental moments -- your thoughts and feelings of *now*, in the simplest linear sense of cause and effect, your thoughts and feelings of *now* come from the previous moment of your thoughts and feelings. And your thoughts and feelings of the previous moment come from -- guess what? -- the previous moment of your thoughts and feelings. You track it back to ten years ago, twenty years ago, when you popped out your mummy's womb, in the mummy's womb, 'Well, maybe I began a month before conception.' Well, no. If my mind existed then, it must have come from a previous moment of my mind. Then clearly you get back to the first moment of conception, when we all assume we began. If you're Christian, God put a soul there, in the egg and sperm; and if you're a materialist, you are only the egg and sperm.

Well, the Buddha has this third option. Your egg and sperm are there. Yep, mummy and daddy worked real hard to get them to stay together, and not go down the toilet with the rest. But what *causes* them to stay together is the entry of consciousness, your consciousness. So you can track your consciousness right in this continuity of mental moments going right back to that first moment of conception. 'Well, I must have begun then.' Well, yes, relatively speaking, this package called 'Robina' began then, but where did the body come from? Mummy and Daddy. Where did your mind come from? Previous moment of

itself. So your mind is its own continuity of mental moments. It's a very simple concept, actually. Not difficult for us to intellectualize, to theorize about. Your mind is its own continuity. And obviously, to assume this, you have to assume it's not physical. Because, clearly, if you think your mind is your brain, then you did come from your parents, which is the materialist view, that your Mummy and Daddy 'made' you, you know? And so the experiential implication of this is the point -- that your mind is *yours*.

Your Mind is Yours

15:16

And that means the contents of it are yours. And so what are the contents of your mind? All the love and the kindness and compassion and wisdom and contentment and anger and jealousy and fear and paranoia and rage -- all of this. This is the contents of your mind. So all of these, being contents of your mind, they too come from previous moments of that particular quality in your mind. So this is a simple idea that implies reincarnation, isn't it? It's a simple concept. Not a difficult concept intellectually. But just that we're so familiar with the view that 'I come from mother and father' and 'my anger comes from mother and father' and my jealousy and my depression and my all the rest come from the DNA and the egg and the sperm and all the rest, you know. They play a role, no argument. But they're not the main thing. For the Buddha, the main things are your mind, your thoughts, your feelings, your emotions, your unconscious. Your tendencies, your feelings. All of this. This is yours. This is *yours*.

So we come fully programmed, Buddha says. Fully programmed, from the first second of conception. We come into this life fully programmed with all of our tendencies, with all of our characteristics. It's very simple, you know. But it's a big surprise to us. I mean, we accept we come fully programmed, but we think the programming comes from mother and father. It doesn't. 'It's mental', Buddha says. Tendencies in the mind are mental and mind is not physical and it comes from previous moments of itself, not from the external condition which is called the brain. One can see indicators in the brain of certain things, no argument with this. So this fundamental point of Buddhism is that your mind is yours. And whatever's in it is simply from you having put it there in the past. Hardly surprising concept -- cause and effect.

This is the essential idea of karma. 'Karma' is a Sanskrit word, that is translated as 'action', really simply. Which implies reaction. Action-reaction, in this meaning: cause and effect. Action-reaction, cause- effect. Seed-fruit, you know. Every microsecond of everything we say, everything we think and feel, and indeed do and say, with our body and speech on the basis of what's in the mind is a karma. An action that necessarily will leave an imprint, or a tendency or a seed in your consciousness and will ripen in the future in that consciousness as your experiences.

This is a simple concept. Not a difficult idea. It's just a question of being able to say it and get our heads around it. It isn't complicated. We think it's complicated, but it's just because we haven't got the right words, you know. It's not a complicated concept at all. So, Buddha's saying basically: we are the creators of

ourselves. It's a very simple point. Whatever's in your mind is there because you put it there, not because Mummy and Daddy did something to you. And this is the way it argues with -- it flies in the face, actually, of the absolute assumption that we all have that's the basis of our lives, and indeed, is as Buddha would simply say, a misconception. That, you know, I am angry because my father was angry. I am jealous because my mother was jealous. I am depressed because I have certain hormones. We always put an external reason to it, you know. Which sort of, for us, is a way of saying, 'It's not my fault.' We've got this dualistic view, you know. We assume we're made by mother and father. We assume the anger and the jealousy and the depression are either there because of the genes or the DNA or they're there because I've got a mean boyfriend, or because I had a lousy mother or a horrible husband or a bad kid or a horrible boss. This is the typical way we talk. And this is, in fact, the view of the materialist world. This is the philosophy of the materialist world that is backed up by the view that your mummy and daddy made you, that you're only physical. And that's why we always look, we always look to the physical to find the problem, you know.

So right now for example in our world, because we've found a relationship between certain physical components in our body and the state called 'depression', then we call it an illness. And therefore we think, 'It's not my fault.' Therefore we don't look into our mind, we look at the physical. Now can you imagine -- now this company's making medicine to fix it. Well, can you imagine when they found the particular components in our physical body that are the basis of anger? I mean they're going to make an awful lot of money, suddenly it'll be called an illness: you're angry -- it's an illness. As soon as it's called an illness, it's very curious how we talk -- 'It's not my fault. It's an illness. I can't help it.'

States of Mind Are Viewpoints

20:06

But the Buddha basically says: anger, jealousy, depression -- they're just states of mind. They're states of mind. Quite simple. And they come from where? From my mind. They're my view. And that's what interesting about *mind*, it sounds shocking to us to hear this -- but let's look at this one, because this really helps us explain karma -- is that states of mind are viewpoints. So it's surprising to us to hear about depression because we're so used to hearing -- even all the ads on the TV for all the pills for depression -- it's this illness that we can't help that's because of certain physical conditions, and so we're like a victim of it. But actually, if we analyze it -- if you're taking the Buddha's view, sure, take your pills, nothing wrong with that. You can go to your Tibetan doctor for the same thing. The Tibetan doctor will feel your pulses and will say, 'Oh, Robina, there's an imbalance of the wind energies in there,' so they'll give you particular herbal medicines, which will help calm down the physical energies -- they don't call it 'chemicals', they call it the 'wind energies', for example. And then it will calm those wind energies down, which have a particular relationship with a particular state of mind. So, it's the same thing -- no argument. Go to a doctor. But the difference is -- the Buddhist view would be: 'the physical is merely the physical, and it does impact upon the mind. But it's not the mind itself.' It's not the main cause, it's just a condition, you know.

So, the mind is the mind. The mind is quite simple. The Buddha's model of the mind is really quite simple. 'Cause this is what creates karma, does actions. It comes from the mind, first and foremost. We can see that body and speech are merely the servants of the mind, you know. So we can divide mind into different ways. One way of describing how the mind functions is in terms of the sensory and the mental. Sensory consciousness is that part of our mind that functions through the medium of our five senses. So: eye consciousness is a part of your mind -- which, remember, isn't physical -- that functions through the medium of the eyeball. You know, the eyelid being open and the various nerves all working nicely. Eye consciousness is mental, functioning through the medium of the eyeball. Ear consciousness, same. Tongue consciousness. Touch consciousness. Like that. That's consciousness functioning through the medium of the body. And the senses are very limited, they're like dumb animals. We give a lot of power to them -- 'We make the body the boss,' as Lama Yeshe says. Very limited in its capacity for cognition.

The Job of the Mind is to Cognize
22:36

Because the job of mind is to cognize. To know. To be aware of that which exists. So, the key point that Buddha's making -- I'll go on to mental consciousness now -- is that—Okay, then the we have -- sorry, I'll say that -- then we have mental consciousness, which is, like I said before, which is where the workshop is. The mind -- the Tibetans point here -- the mind, consciousness -- this is where your thoughts, feelings, emotions -- all this business -- is. Your depression, your anger, your jealousy. This is your mind, mental consciousness. This is what we have to learn to know. Because for the Buddha, this is the source of happiness and suffering. And the way to understand it is very simple, because when we understand -- if we think of emotions, we know that anger is very uncomfortable, and causes pain and suffering. We know that depression is terrible. But we can't quite work out how can we change it, because we think of it as an emotion. But if we look into the Buddhist view of the mind, we get right to the bare bones of these emotions in the mental consciousness. They, finally, are thoughts. They're finally, a cognitive process. When we can understand this point -- which takes listening to, which takes time, you know -- we can understand how we create karma, we can understand how it causes our happiness, we can understand how it causes our suffering, and finally, we can understand how we can change it.

Emotions -- we think, 'How can I change them?' It seems overwhelming, when you're in the throes of depression or anger or jealousy -- it seems like a joke, doesn't it -- to call it a cognitive process. It sounds sort of cruel and kind of mechanical. But finally, this is the point. This is what it is. This is the Buddhist view. So when we utilize these marvelous psychological techniques called meditation -- in particular, the type of meditation where one is learning to focus the mind, to concentrate the mind -- we can begin to cultivate that capacity to focus the mind. Then we can begin to see beneath the emotional packaging. This is where you can be your own therapist, or indeed, go to someone else to help

you, it doesn't matter. Whatever tools you use to help you, great -- to get inside your own mind. Inside your own head, as we'd say.

You've got to go beneath those emotions, right into the mind itself, to listen to, to recognize, to locate the fundamental cognitive constructs. In other words: stories, viewpoints, opinions. They're all that. Attachment is an opinion about something. Depression is an opinion about something. Anger is an opinion. They are all viewpoints and opinions. To get right down beneath the emotional component, beneath what feels like the physical component of them -- and this is utilizing skillful techniques called meditation -- that's where we can learn to see it. And once we can learn to see this, then we can learn to reconstruct our cognitions. Reconstruct our cognitive stories. Not joking. That's what being a Buddhist is, actually. That's what you're doing as a Buddhist. You're changing the way you think, quite literally. This is it. This is really being a Buddhist.

The reason you have mindfulness meditation, the reason you have any of these is to help us do that job. If this is true, and we can do it -- and Buddha says, 'of course we can, it's just a bunch of thoughts,' they're the least concrete thing you can find. The irony is, they're like Mount Everest inside us, actually rock solid. But these are the source of our problems. This comes right down to it. So it's on the basis of these neurotic states of mind, the deluded states of mind, the miserable states of mind -- because as far as our mental consciousness is concerned, we've got positive states of mind, negative ones and neutral. There's no fourth category. Forget the neutral. You've got positive ones and negative ones. And the positive states of mind and the accumulation of these are the main cause of my happiness, and therefore the main cause of my capacity to make others happy. And the negative states of mind -- the neuroses, the delusions, the lies, the misconceptions, the rubbish, the nonsense, the ego's voices -- they are the source of my suffering and the source of why I harm others.

States of Mind as Creating Karma

27:06

So this concept is not complicated. For the Buddha, this is the summary of the entire universe. This is the summary of why there is happiness and why there is suffering. It comes down to this. So on the basis of these states of mind -- the negative ones -- we use our body and speech to harm others, create karma, put strong imprints in the mind which ripen in the future as our experiences. It isn't a complicated concept actually, it's just so utterly different from the view we have now, you know. So, when it comes down to it, from every point of view, we need to know our minds. So, you know, you can learn Jung's view of the mind, you can learn Freud's; you can have your own view -- I don't mind, that's cool. But here, if you want to be Buddhist, if that's your choice, we need to know Buddha's view, which is why we need to hear the teachings. Just closing your eyes and watching your breath and being mindful is not enough, believe me. It's nothing bad, nothing wrong, but it's not enough. You might be mindful of what you're thinking, but if you don't know how to identify it and label it accurately, how can you ever know what it is, you know? Not possible. You have to listen to Buddha's teachings, Buddha's description of the mind. Then you can decide whether you want to, you know, take that model on as yours in your life.

So far so good? Any questions from this?

Deconstructing/Reconstructing and The Fundamental Misconception
29:11

Q: When you say that mind is all these stories and opinions and you said you have to reconstruct your cognitive processes, don't you have to *deconstruct* your cognitive processes before...

Ven.: Deconstruct, then reconstruct, absolutely. Of course you do. Yeah, in other words, if you have a wrong understanding about mathematics, you've got to first identify your mistakes, and then put the right thoughts in, don't you? So, of course, yeah, that's part of the process.

It's interesting, there's a -- we've just been in DC (Washington) with His Holiness, he's been there for ten days -- and he was talking about, one of the days, you know, the main cause -- as far as Buddhist psychology is concerned -- the root delusion of mind, the root negative state is called, simply, ignorance. It's a regular word, you know, but here it has a really specific function, a really specific definition. So, as he said, there're two kinds of ignorance. The first kind of ignorance, and just in general terms now, is where you've got the facts wrong...no sorry, there's the ignorance of just merely not knowing something -- so you can just, not know that's called a 'cup' -- that's just ordinary everyday ignorance and that's bad enough. But that's fairly easy to rectify. You simply have no opinion.

'Oh I haven't got a clue what it is. What is it, Robina? 'It's a cup!' 'Oh, great! Thanks!' It doesn't take long to learn the truth, does it? But if you've got a very strong view in your mind that's, that's a *knife*...first you don't know it's a cup, but second you have a very rigidly held view that that's a knife, so you've got double trouble, haven't you? Do you understand? And so that -- you've first got to deconstruct the lie, and you're very committed to thinking it's a knife, before you can even then learn the truth.

So, there's two levels of ignorance. And the general one, this '*ma rig pa*' as they call it in Tibetan -- unawareness, basically -- '*ma rig pa*', unawareness or ignorance . This is the fundamental, the most deeply held, primordial misconception or lie in the mind that is the root of all others. And it's ignorance of how things finally exist, but on top of that it has its own fantasy view, which is why it's so hard to get rid of it.

So you could say that all the other delusions on the basis of it: attachment, anger, depression, jealousy and all the rest, they also've got their lies. They also got double trouble. So attachment -- so all these states of mind -- they've got it wrong about things. This is why one of the words -- one of the synonyms for negative states of mind in Buddhist psychology -- I love this one best -- is the word 'delusion'. So we know -- if someone accuses you of being delusional, you're very offended. It means you're living in la-la land, doesn't it? It means you're not in touch with reality, quite literally. And that's exactly what Buddha's saying. That these negative states of mind of ours, which happen to have the

function of causing intense suffering to oneself just by the having of them, (forget about the harm you do to others). But when you look at it at a deeper level, at the more cognitive process, they're liars.

And the trouble is -- the double trouble here is: we have a lie in the mind, ('It's a knife.') and you believe it one million percent and you'll give your life for that belief. Because everything in the world is based on our belief in these lies...that's the part that makes it so painful to change, you know. So yeah, of course, one has to deconstruct the lies and then slowly learn what Buddha would suggest is the truth. So one way of talking about this -- it's a good point -- it's a bit surprising to us -- is that, you know, this business about the negative states of mind, how they have these two characteristics. One is that they're very painful. One of the many terms for, in Tibetan, in Buddhist psychology for them, is they are ...disturbing. They are extremely emotionally painful. That's the one we are in touch with. Check when you are jealous, depressed, angry...extremely painful, isn't it? The suffering is intense in oneself, just that alone. And that's usually how we think of this stuff. But then to hear this other level of it is quite new to us.

It takes a bit of a time to see it, but once we can, we're really on track, being a Buddhist, you know. Seeing this lying component, how it finally is, underneath the packaging of these powerful feelings and emotions, if you get right down to the bare bones of it, it is a conceptual process, it's a cognitive process. In other words, if you think -- we say -- you know -- we keep our journal, for example. You write down your feelings, don't you? We can write them down because we know that feelings have words. We call it a feeling but we're mostly familiar with the pain in the body and the nightmare in our head, the actual torment. That's the painful feeling part of it. But we can put words to it. And that's what we need to do -- put words to it. Because, finally, it's words.

Emotions as Thoughts

34:03

You look at someone who's angry. Let's say, Dinae and I are having, you know -- let's say I'm a person who expresses her anger. So, you know, normally we think of that as -- let's say Dinae isn't. Let's say she keeps it quiet, you know. And she doesn't—you know, when you see someone angry, you see the spit coming out of her mouth and the voice is loud and the tears are coming and the face is bright, full of blood, you know, panting and screaming and hitting... 'Oh, look, she's angry. Wow.' You can see the evidence of it. But it's only the body, it's only the physical evidence of something that's going on in the mind right now. Now, Dinae might not scream and shout and yell, let's say, but if she looks into her mind, she can hear this raging in there, but we can't see the evidence of it. So, normally speaking, the clichéd idea of anger is we see this at the behavior level, which is fine...but the difference would be, let's say -- two things here: in the case of -- we've both got anger, but hers doesn't harm other people, it just harms her; mine harms other people as well as myself. But what I'm getting at -- the real point I'm getting at is: if you transcribe my words, put them on a piece of paper, and Dinae wrote down her thoughts, and put them on a piece of paper, and we didn't put names on the top of the page, you wouldn't see the difference, would you? Are you seeing my point now? What you'd be hearing is a lot of raging

thoughts. Because finally, after the shouting has died down, you've got words. And the words are thoughts, aren't they? But we're so distracted by the words -- do you understand my point? We see it as the physical thing but it comes down to being thoughts.

So, Dinae's raging in her mind might even be angrier than my words. Do you understand my point? Many people are this way -- they don't express a single thing but their mind is like a maniac. So, that's where anger exists, that's where it finally -- that's the source of it. The body and speech do the harm, look at the world! Do you understand? But look at the source -- it's the mind. And it finally comes down to thoughts -- because what are words but our thoughts? It's so simple. So anger is thoughts, you can't argue with this, you can't say it's not... but it seems a bit opposite to us, it seems kind of wrong to say it. Do you hear my point? It is so clear.

Thoughts as Interpretations/Viewpoints

36:00

Anger, depression, jealousy -- they're thoughts. And what is a thought but it's an interpretation of a certain event, isn't it? A certain person, a certain thing, it might be about the chocolate cake, about my life, about myself, everything -- it all comes down to being -- all these thoughts are interpretations. So, if you've got a person who's fairly content in their life, is easygoing, who doesn't get angry, who is patient, is kind, is loving -- do you understand my point? We know people like this, surprise, surprise. And when things go wrong, they're cool. So if they were to write down their interpretation of that event, just by reading it, you'd see it's quite reasonable, they're very patient, they're rather forgiving, they're fairly compassionate, and they're content. You get my point here? But you write down the interpretation of a person who's depressed about it, you hear the interpretation of a person who's angry about it, you'll have three different interpretations, won't you? It comes down to this. We hear this as real, but we think the real meaning is something else, but this *is* the point.

When we can really get to see that all our emotions come down to being thoughts -- interpretations, in other words. So all Buddha's saying is: the positive ones -- the negative ones are painful for you, honey, he said, and they cause you to harm others. Because what they cause you to do is see the others as bad, or see them as the cause of your suffering. That's kind of what their story is. They're the source of the pain. And the positive ones are the source of your happiness. Check the person who is patient, kind and not depressed and not angry and not jealous. We know there are some people like this -- we meet them. And we can see -- they seem to float through life, don't they? They don't seem to bump into things, nothing seems to go very wrong. We don't quite understand it, but we can see the evidence of it. Well, the reason, the Buddha would say, is because their thoughts are positive, are reasonable and are -- to some extent -- in touch with reality. The person who's got the unhappiest thoughts, the depressed thoughts, the jealous, angry, neurotic, you know, all the other ones -- join the club, we all recognize them -- that's why we suffer. And it's a shock to us to hear, cause we think, 'Well, excuse me, it can't be all my fault'. We keep wanting to factor in mummy and daddy and the mean world and George Bush -- well, it's not

George Bush anymore, is it? Well, whoever you think is the cause of your suffering out there. Politically speaking, he's over now, he's retired. You understand my point. We love to put it on someone else out there, on an event out there, always something external, including our own chemicals. 'Well, it's not my fault,' you know.

Accountability

38:40

So, the accountability that Buddhist practice demands is regardless of the external conditions. One has to know one's mind, because that's the one we can change. Yes, certain people's external conditions make it quite tough -- if you're in a prison, living around psychos and you can't open that door. You can say 'Well, I can't help being angry, I'm surrounded by mean people.' You might say that. But the ones who are really practicing don't say that. They know that this is their physical condition, and this is indeed the result of their karma, (and we'll talk more about that in a minute) and so they will adapt themselves to that condition and still work on their minds.

The person who's got the chemicals that aren't working, that seem to be the trigger for depression, yes, you recognize that you've got those particular chemicals, but the depression is your mind, it's your viewpoint. You might be around people who are mean and ugly who hit you all the time, and if you've got an angry tendency it'll make it easy for you to get angry, it's true. But if you're really being accountable, you'll recognize the anger's yours. This is what we have to do. This is the toughest part. This is the part that's massive for us. So difficult because we're so used to this dualistic way of talking. It's always like, 'It's not my fault. It's not my fault.'

And that's the view of the materialist world, you look. It's an assumption of ego. 'I didn't ask to get born, did I? It's not my fault. My mother made me. My father made me.' We don't want to blame God -- well, if you're an Italian Catholic, you will. Italians are very -- they blame God in the most rude way, you know. They say, 'God is a pig!' when things go wrong. They say even worse things about Our Lady, you know. We don't mind blaming our parents, you know -- a bit nervous about blaming God, maybe.

So, the whole way ego works, Buddha says, is in its nature dualistic. It's always, 'Poor me, the victim.' Lama Yeshe would call ego the 'self-pity me'. The 'self-pity me', you know. And as the ego, you look at how we are every time -- instantly trying to cover ourselves, defend ourselves, 'It's not fair.' 'It's not my fault.' 'I didn't mean to.' Everything to try to deny accountability. It's so painful for us to be accountable. You look at it. It's typical. This is how ego is, Buddha says, this is its nature. This is the way it is. So, to go against this and slowly become accountable, and this is where if you listen to the Buddha's views of karma, (that your consciousness comes from you in the past, not your Mummy and Daddy) it reinforces this ability to be accountable. Because my mind is mine, I came fully programmed with my tendencies. Don't blame anybody else. But this includes our good ones as well, and we forget about those. We agonize, 'Why do bad things happen to me?' We never agonize, 'Why do good things happen to me?'

We don't care why, just give me more, you know. But we have all the good things for the same reason, too.

Seeds and Fruits

41:44

So, looking more into the karma one, let's go a bit more into how -- using the analogy of seeds and fruits -- how our past actions ripen in the present. Because this is -- if you like -- I like to call it -- it's almost like -- the creation principle, you know. Why things happen.

So, there are four ways -- you could say -- there are four ways in which our actions from the past -- meaning past lives -- you know, before we even got entered into this present womb of our mummy -- there are four ways those past actions ripen in the present. Or indeed, there are four ways in which our present actions leave seeds in the mind that will ripen in the future as one's experiences. It's a constant process, ongoing. Every microsecond of everything that goes on in our mind, and the things we do on the basis of those thoughts with our body and speech, this is the karmic process. This is constantly occurring. This is the natural process of cause and effect, constantly in play.

The 'Fully Ripened Result'

43:00

So -- the four ways our karma ripens. The first, main one -- they call it the 'The Fully Ripened Result' -- is actually the type of rebirth we get born into. So, you know, if we're materialists, or if we're Christians, for example, we both agree on one thing at least -- that someone else made us. I was made by God. I was made by mummy and daddy. They're the same principle, aren't they? That you're made by someone else. Which means it's got nothing to do with you. Whereas the Buddha says, 'Everything to do with me.' We are accountable. Our past actions are the main cause of why my mind found its way to my present mother's human womb. So, it's -- in a sense -- like, why blame your parents? They're just lying there having fun and you come along... So Buddha puts us right in the center of our own accountability. Which is kind of an interesting concept -- who thought that you were the main cause of who you are? Big surprise...

So -- the first one -- and this is something the Buddha would say not more than a few weeks before conception in your present mother's womb, your consciousness -- if you track it back moment by moment, and clearly at a more subtle level -- your consciousness has different levels of gross and subtlety -- so at a more subtle level your consciousness tracks back a few weeks and you'll find that it was in another form, another life. And at the time -- very simply speaking -- at the time of the death of that life -- and it doesn't always follow that it was a human life, there's a whole bunch of options of types of rebirth as far as the Buddha's concerned -- at the time of the past death, then a very strong tendency of morality must have ripened at that time due to many, many, many complicated causes and conditions all coming together. So this is a very simplistic explanation of it.

So, we can deduce that, because the Buddha would say, that morality karma -- from the propensity of having practiced morality, and, no doubt, as Lama Zopa puts it, having been practiced in the context of a spiritual path -- that very strong tendency, that very strong seed from having practiced morality -- meaning goodness, meaning not harming others, living in the context even of vows of morality -- that would have been the seed that would have ripened at the time of the past death that would have then programmed your consciousness that finally such that when it left the body, at a subtler level, (because death process is a gradual deconstruction of this person) the gross level of the body and the senses ceasing and eventually the breath ceasing and going to more subtle and more subtle and more subtle levels, until eventually it gets to what they call the 'very subtle consciousness', they even call this 'indestructible consciousness', the subtlest level of your consciousness, which, simply speaking, you could say, is the repository of all the karmic imprints. It's like all the programming. Buddha would say, there's not a single thing we think or do or say that goes astray. There's not a single thing we think or do or say that isn't programmed into our consciousness. That's just the nature of every thought -- it's a karma. It's like programming yourself.

So we've programmed ourselves, basically -- in a very major way -- with past practice of morality, of goodness; in context, no doubt, of a spiritual path which then ripened at the past death when the consciousness got to the subtle level and eventually left the body, which is when you're dead. Then it would have been on autopilot, basically, programmed, and then in a few weeks or very briefly, could have been a much shorter time, after having been into some kind of 'intermediate state' like a dream state, then our consciousness found its way very precisely into our present mother's Fallopian tube and joined the egg and sperm there. The main cause of this is our past morality. Your father and mother having sex is just a 'co-operative cause'. They did not make you, they did not create you. They merely had sex. Your consciousness had very strong karmic connection with them from past history with those particular parents. I mean, it's a highly complex scenario, you know, but simply speaking that karma ripened at the time of your death and then caused your mind to go on autopilot to find its way into our particular mother's human womb. So, Buddha would say we won the lottery. One lama said, at the time of a male and female human having sex, billions of consciousnesses that are recently passed away -- and that's obviously not just from the human realm, Buddha would assert a whole spectrum of possibilities of types of consciousnesses existing in different realms -- that at the time of the male and female having sex, billions of consciousnesses are all hovering around trying to get in. Well, we got in. We won the lottery. No kidding. From Buddha's point of view, we should be weeping in delight every day at how fortunate we are, getting such an extraordinarily fortunate life. Human life -- so few of those, obviously -- we have more mosquitoes in one summer in the backyard than you have humans at any one time.

So, clearly it's easier to get a mosquito birth, dog birth, giraffe birth -- maybe less giraffes, not so many of them -- fish, who knows how many fish, plenty of fish -- the vast majority -- anyway, billions and trillions of other consciousnesses, we can see this. So, we got the human one. Amazing -- already amazing. That's the

first way our karma ripened -- we got this human birth. But, you know, Mother Theresa and Hitler both got one of those, so clearly there's some differences.

Tendencies (Actions Similar to the Cause)

49:03

That gets us to the second way in which our past actions ripened in the present. And this is in terms of our tendencies, our characteristics, our personality, our depression, our kindness, our wish to kill, our wish to lie, our being good at piano, our being good at math; whatever it might be. And that's an interesting point, psychologically speaking. In Buddhist terms, we give equal status to whether you're good at love, good at anger or good at music. It's just a tendency. We make this big dramatic difference, you know, we are honored, actually -- you think about it -- we are delighted and own responsibility for our being good at music .

'Why are you good at piano, Robina?'

'Oh, well, I've got a tendency and I practiced five or ten years -- what did you think?' We're honored to own responsibility for our being good at music.

'Why are you good at anger, Robina?'

'Oh, well, it's my father's fault...'. No accountability whatsoever! We love being accountable for our being good at music, or math or being a gymnast, you know, but not emotional stuff. We have this different set of laws when it comes to emotional stuff, which I find most fascinating -- no logic at all.

The Buddha says, those tendencies -- whether you're angry, jealous or just being good at music -- are just tendencies. From what? Why do we have a tendency? From having done it before. Quite simple. Mozart clearly had musical tendencies. Hitler clearly had other tendencies. Expressed them, didn't he, in his actions.

So the second way our karma ripens is in terms of our tendencies, our personality. And our mothers and fathers -- this is a big shock to us -- they're not the main cause of this. The absolute default explanation in the materialist world is 'it's all in the DNA and the genes'. That's why we always go to the parents first, to check 'why I am what I am'. No, we don't need to. Your mother and father might also be angry -- yeah, my mummy was good at music. Everyone says, 'Yeah, Robina's good at music because her mummy was good at music.' No -- Robina's good at music because she practiced it before. So has my mother, and we happen to come together. And then she encouraged my music by teaching me. It doesn't come from your parents, Buddha said -- it's a very simple point. A simple point, but shocking to us. So, your tendencies -- they call this 'actions similar to the cause.' They're yours. You're fully programmed with every one of these from the first second of conception. Millions of these different imprints. Millions of these different tendencies.

Experiences Similar to the Cause

51:29

The third way that your karma ripens -- your actions from the past ripen in the present: this is called 'experiences similar to the cause'; and that's all the stuff that happens to you. The people you meet, the parents you get, the teachers, the

abusers, the ones who are loving to you, the ones who rape you, the ones who give you a million dollars, the ones who are kind to you, the ones who steal from you, whatever it might be -- the way you're seen in the world. The way you're treated and seen in the world. This also is the main cause—this also is your past actions.

So Buddha puts us in the center, in the absolute center -- each one of us -- in the center of all our experiences. He says 'our actions are the main cause of why we are who we are and why what happens to us happens to us.' All the good and all the bad. This applies to giraffes, dogs, ants, fish, humans -- all '*sem chens*'. The term in Tibetan for 'sentient being' is '*sem chen*', 'mind possessor'. We're all mind possessors. Buddha says that there's not an atom of space where you won't find mind possessors. Trillions of them. So, for this reason, Buddhist psychology, interestingly, refers to all sentient beings, not just humans.

Environmental Karma

52:36

So, the first way your karma ripens due to your past actions is you get this birth - or not birth, for that matter. Second is your tendencies. Third is your experiences. And fourth, they call it even, environmental karma. Environmental karma, which is the very way the physical world impacts upon us. So that could mean -- so here we are, sitting in this room. It's quite pleasant, isn't it? It's quite peaceful, pleasant view out there, it's quiet, you know -- the walls aren't dripping with mold. It's pleasantly painted. It smells nice. Don't take this for granted -- this experience of a pleasant environmental experience is the result of our collective virtue. You know, if suddenly the building explodes, you know, or a volcano, this is due to karma. So basically, generally speaking, Buddha's fundamental point about karma is that suffering, or -- if you like -- it's when everything goes wrong, you know -- could be externally, could be the people, could be the environment, could be in your own mind -- when everything's out of whack, out of balance, inharmonious, disharmonious, when the elements are all crazy, when people are all fighting, when people are mean to you, when your own mind's berserk -- this is when everything's all messed up -- this is the result of negativity. Negative karma. It's not blame, it's not punishment. There's no concept of punishment in Buddhism. It's a natural law, you know.

And when everything's working nicely -- like people are being harmonious, people are praising you and liking you, the weather's pleasant, the elements are behaving nicely -- this is the result of virtue. It's a very simple principle. Happiness and when things 'work' comes from virtue. Unhappiness and when things don't work is coming from suffering, from negativity, from non-virtue. It's a simple law -- but it's not punishment and reward. If you have a Creator Principle -- like as a Catholic, I'm not criticizing it, but it's not the Buddhist view, that's all, I'm making a distinction -- there's God, who is the creator of the universe, the creator of me and therefore the creator of all the laws of morality and so that's why 'sin' is defined as 'going against God's will'. That's what it means. That's what is a 'sin', when you go against God's will.

But for the Buddha, that's not what a negative action is -- going against his will. It has nothing to do with him, he's just the messenger. It's like when the doctor tells you you'll get cancer if you smoke -- you know, you don't go away and say, 'Well, as long as he doesn't see me smoke I won't get cancer.' Or, if you get cancer, you think, 'Oh, my doctor punished me.' Not like that -- there's no concept like that in Buddhism. Buddha's more like a doctor -- he's giving you his own experience. 'I've found that if you kill and lie and steal, it'll cause you suffering, baby, not to mention causing others' suffering.' It's his experience, you know? So he's giving us advice.

So negative action, as far as Buddha's concerned, is going against the natural law. Virtue is natural, virtue is a natural law, Buddha says. Things work harmoniously and nicely when virtue is in place. When non-virtue is prevalent, everything goes berserk. It's very simple.

So the four ways your karma ripens: the very fact that you're this human being, with this very particular family and friends and people who harm you and people who help you -- whatever those experiences are. All your tendencies and even the way the physical world impacts upon you -- where you were born, the way the physical world is, all of this -- our actions in the past are the main cause of this. Buddha puts us absolutely in charge. 'We are the boss', Buddha says.

So if I am the boss of my own present experiences, if I am the cause of it, then indeed I can be the cause of my future experiences -- which is why you should then check up, do I like this life, do I like people punching me in the nose? Do I like having people being angry at me? Do I like being depressed and angry and jealous and poor and living in a volcanic environment and all polluted or horrible? No, I don't. Then, okay, there must be causes of this; what were they? You check up; well, do I like this? No. Well, guess what, what's the solution? Don't do it again, baby! It's pretty simple.

This is Buddhist practice. Not complicated. It's just that we fight mightily against this 'cause it sounds like blame, 'Oh you mean it's my fault...I must go and kill myself.' 'Cause we're used to this dualistic view of 'poor me' 'victim me' 'not fair' 'life is done to me, I didn't ask to get born, it's not my fault'. That is the default mode of ego. So we shout and yell and mightily resist this simple presentation. It's a bit different one, I admit. But one has to think about it, you know. If you like Buddhism, one has to think about this. This is the nuts and bolts of Buddha's view, actually.

So, there's a summary of karma. Do you want to have a break or something? How about one or two questions and the a little tea break? Is tea break the plan? Okay, some questions and we have a tea break...

Tool Kit ***57:41***

Q: So, in changing the mind, what I find so helpful about Buddhism is that there's little rules and things to say in your mind, cause I find anger come up at unusually inopportune times and what I try to do now is just stop that action

and I repeat the (?) mantra and constantly bless the whole world because otherwise I'd be pissed off...so that's appropriate?

Ven.: Absolutely, darling! I think there's a million ways, a million little -- we can have a tool kit with a million tools in it that we can take out and use in our own selves according to our own needs at different times. And that's really the way to think about it -- it's like cooking lessons. The more you have tools at your hand, the more you know how to apply something, that's how you lead your life. So that's what one takes, you know -- each person will answer that their own response differently. That's you, taking the tools and applying them. Perfect, honey. Totally perfect.

Anger as Productive (as Opposed to Aversion)

58:54

Q: In the Dalai Lama's book, 'Overcoming Anger', he said in the first pages that anger can be a productive emotion. Especially if it's a motivating emotion to correct a wrong situation. What he says is that it is hatred, or more properly, aversion that is the main difficulty.

Ven.: It's often here is it's a problem with the words, you know, yeah, so, I remember one time he said, a journalist, he said, 'Anger (in the usual way we understand it, you know), is good, it motivates us to do things.' And he said, 'I know what you mean, but when it's coming from' -- as you said -- 'aversion or hatred, it's kind of impotent and it doesn't last. But if it's coming from the genuine wish to change the world, which is compassion, then strong action is very necessary.' Technically you wouldn't even call that anger, then. It looks like it, I remember, you think of all those -- yeah, anyway, it's a good point. I remember reading Martin Luther King one time, he said, 'It's okay to be angry.' He meant it's okay to find fault. But then you say, 'What can I do about it?' That's when it becomes productive. Because you analyze most of our anger, it's normally impotent -- we love to find fault, we love to shout and yell and stamp our feet and blame. But there's no action from it. It's just becomes crazy, you go crazy, you know? Whereas finding fault is necessary -- look at the war in Iraq, that's wrong! Then you say, 'What can I do about it?' and half the time we have to say there's not much we can do about it, but there's no benefit shouting and yelling and saying, 'Well, blame George Bush,' you know. If we can do something to change it, that's when it becomes proactive and necessary. You're absolutely right, yeah, exactly. So true. Yes?

The Positive State of Mind of a Practitioner

01:00:44

Q: When you're describing someone that has a -- that's an optimist, that goes through life and, you know, has positive thoughts, kind of floats along and all that...

Ven.: Well, positive and kind and forgiving and not jealous and not angry and not depressed...I meant more specific than just being optimistic...I meant quite specifically, if you observe their behavior, if they are, say, really a practitioner, they're not jealous, they're not depressed, they're not angry; they've probably

worked on their mind, so they're more peaceful, they're more forgiving...they might struggle, even, but they're more -- everything works smoothly, you can see the way they thus float through life, in a sense, can't you see this? So what's your point?

Q: Well, the way you were describing...that's part of the answer... but...presumably, someone could be equally deluded, an equally delusional optimist as a delusional pessimist and have a fairly rational materialist view of the world and be realistic...

Ven.: Sure, I understand, but they were your words, about optimistic and pessimistic, I wasn't necessarily saying that; I was being more -- Okay, let me say it more precisely then... Let's assume there's a person who has worked on their mind. The result would be: less angry, less jealous, less depressed, less low self esteem, more confident, more compassionate, more wise. So they can be in the middle of a war zone, or indeed, in a prison -- I can think of some people -- but because they've worked on their mind, life is not difficult for them, because they've worked on their mind and truly changed the way they see things. I don't just mean vaguely being optimistic and pessimistic -- I'm not talking like a -- that's a very easy-going way to say it -- I mean very precisely they have diminished in their minds the negative ways of interpreting things. So, therefore, what you're going to get is a person who's looks like a happy guy, just pleasant and easy-going. That's the result...

Q: You don't necessarily have to have a Buddhist world view...

Ven.: I didn't mention the word 'Buddhism'...I didn't mention the word 'Buddhism', did I? Now, I know what you're saying -- I'm not trying to be tricky, now -- I didn't say that. I said -- I'm talking about the level of the mind -- kind, loving, depressed, angry, jealous -- you could say Buddha runs with that, but he does not own this stuff. So any method anybody uses to be a moral, good person, hey! That's what we're talking about here... It's just -- Buddha didn't create all these things, but he works with this stuff...this is the stuff of being a Buddhist..... Yes, dear?

The Mental Continuum Takes a New Body

01:03:21

Q: This mental stream that enters...

Ven.: Your mummy and daddy's egg and sperm...

Q: ...and enters the womb...

Ven.: This mental stream *is* what enters the egg and sperm, which is the beginning of conception, which is the beginning of Al.

Q: Is this... mental stream... just kind of out floating around...?

Ven.: Not at all floating, no, it's very programmed and very directly coming from a previous life, leaving the body, already programmed; let's just assume it's you before you got to this womb, and it's really propelled forward by the... by its own kind of past habits and then the new condition arises called 'mother and father' and you run like a magnet to them.

They talk about karma -- it's a bit like -- if you practiced, say, piano for twenty years, you could say you've programmed your mind, haven't you? You'd say that, very simply. So your mind just runs in that direction. There's no argument, you just -- if your fingers are at the piano, and you've practiced the piano to perfection, it's just inside you and your fingers just do the work, effortlessly. Wouldn't you agree with this? So, your mind's not just floating around, it's very programmed, it's very one-directional, propelled -- quotes, using the Buddhist term -- 'propelled by the force of your past karma'. Another way to put it is, 'propelled by the force of your past practice'.

So we've practiced anger, and practiced jealousy, and practicedour mind just goes there. So in other words, our mind just goes to whatever we practice. So the broader... going from life to life, it's propelled by the various causes in the mind from the past habits, and that programming is pretty one-directional, pretty focused and propelled forward. That's how they talk about it. Is that... do you hear understand my point? Yes?

Environmental Karma /'Experience Similar to the Cause' Clarified

01:05:11

Q: Let's talk about environmental karma... Okay, so you go into a situation, you are as calm as you can be with this particular person, you are patient, you are practicing what you know to be true. All of a sudden, you deal with a hurricane of a person...

Ven.: Okay, this is not environmental karma... this is more the 'experience similar to the cause' -- how you interact with other people, this one. Go on.

Q: ...and on the outside they appear to be very kind, generous, giving. All the things that you thought were going to be occurring in reality. When you get in there, this changes and they become a hurricane, and you do not know what you're getting from one moment to the next. So, a person has a chance, an opportunity to not only work on the mind, but to get out of that situation, because that other person isn't necessarily going to change. You are the only one that has the responsibility to change your mind, your mental status. And there's no reason for you to stay in that quagmire with that hurricane person....

Ven.: No, of course not... Buddha says if you can change something, please change it. But if you can't... that's like my friends in prison -- they can't ask for the psycho -- 'I don't want this psycho in my cell. Can I have a nice person please?' They don't have such luxury. So they're forced into the most profound level of just accepting and truly changing their mind... So, of course, one doesn't need to. Of course not. But the trouble is, look at us in our relationships. We go like moths to a flame. The irony of ego is we love to blame somebody, and we're

too insecure and afraid to leave our relationships. Look at the torture of ordinary people's relationships. It's heartbreaking, isn't it? But of course, one has to have the courage... If there's nothing more there, and you can't help this other person, and they're not going to be receptive to it, and it's drowning you, too...it's very foolish -- get the hell out, immediately. Of course. My goodness, yes. No question. Yes?

Purification

01:07:33

Q: Can we alleviate past negative karma through...

Ven.: Oh hell yes! Absolutely. That's called purification...We're going to do that on what night? Wednesday night. We're going to do that practice on Wednesday night. 'How to Purify Karma.' We're going to do that on Wednesday night.

Q: No purification today. Not today, just Wednesday (laughter)...

Ven.: Well, we'll talk, we can do it maybe -- you know, we might end up doing it. We can talk about it absolutely today... Actually, it's sort of like, just think of the analogy of a garden. Whatever's in your garden is there because you put it there. And the rubbish is there because you didn't pull it out, right? So, you've got to first own your garden, and your garden's your life. Whatever's in there, honey, is yours. What a drag, you know. First of all the big job is to own it. Then second, you've got to assess it. Do I like this and this and this? What caused this and this and this? What do I do with it? And that's what you're working on. So you've got to be able to pull it out -- you can't pull them out, you might as well die now. Give up and die now. Do you understand my point? So of course you can. Karma is this highly dynamic process of cause and effect. You can rectify things, you can adjust, you know? Pull this one out, grow this one, fix this one; it's just a practical dynamic process of you working on your mind. Do you understand? Absolutely... Hang on a sec -- somebody over here had their hand up...I thought...before. No you didn't. Never mind... Go on, yes?

Anger and Attachment

01:09:05

Q: So, you're almost making this connection for me, but I need a little help yet...so like let's say, here's an example... there's this person I work with who comes to work with 'Death to the Taliban' all over his shirt...

Ven.: What?

Q: ...'Death to the Taliban' ...and like gory imagery of the Taliban... So I've got this person in my life who wears this shirt I find very offensive... and then I have another person in my life who did something very egregious during a ceremony that I found very offensive. In all of these cases, I'm choosing to just shut my mouth, even though I have a very hard time. I don't, like...I feel like my response ... and then celebrating people who have done a lot of killing and probably many instances within myself of this similar conflict.

Ven.: Sure.

Q: So, what I'm trying to talk about is...you talk about the person in prison with someone else. And that guy having to just come to terms with the psycho and accept him and figure out how to accept it...

Ven.: Because he can't change the situation...

Q: Yeah, because there's something in my mind that says...that is afraid to accept...

Ven.: Okay.

Q: And the reason I'm afraid to accept is then suddenly I'm afraid that I will find that acceptable.

Ven.: No, no no no no no, no... That's the thing. We'll talk about this later, maybe. But when we start to look into more deeply all the, our own neurotic states of mind... Our attachment -- so in other words, the good part of you wants harmony and the world to be nice. So when you see somebody who happily hates a group of people, it freaks us out, of course. But the good part of us is sad about it, but the attachment in us is a bit...is upset by it. And the attachment in you wants it to be all nice. So, that's the part that we have to then be brave -- because as soon as attachment doesn't get what it wants, aversion arises. Anger arises. So, you have anger that you're seeing the t--shirt. That's the part we have to not be scared of. And so then that's one point. Then the other thing is this: If you know that saying something will help the situation, then you must say it. But 99% of the time, it's just coming from our own anger and it starts a war. So there's no benefit. So, putting up with something isn't negative. We think putting up with something is passive. And this is Jan's point -- it is very important to say something and do something if you really feel there will be benefit to it. So you know, for example, a friend of mine in 1987 was part of the little kind of 'mini-uprising' in Tibet. He's one of the monks, right? So, all the monks and nuns who were in the mini-uprising, they're going to demonstrations, and they're all shouting and yelling like people do at demonstrations. Well, one would assume they're angry. And I said to him, after he'd escaped -- his brother got murdered, father got murdered, he escaped -- 'cause his friend got -- he got arrested and then he escaped -- and I said to him, 'Do you ever get angry?' and he laughed. He said, 'Angry? What for?'

So, he wasn't getting angry, he was simply expressing -- he had the courage to get out there and stick his head on the line and demonstrate. Okay. First of all, he did that, but he didn't have any expectation that suddenly everything would change. He had the courage to do it just to make a point. But, no change occurred, he just got arrested, you know. So you could say something, but in the end if there's no one else to hear it, all you've done is express your own anger, the person who doesn't hear it thinks you're stupid, and you haven't helped a single person...

Q: Yeah, what I'm left with is just this little cesspool of anger...

Ven.: That's right, that's right...

Q: ...and I won't express it because I ask that question, 'Do I really think something's going to shift?' Not if I'm speaking out of this place. And so then I'm just sitting on this pile...

Ven.: That's your anger. That's what you have to deal with. If saying something would help, then you must say it. But, that's what wisdom is. Compassion's not enough, as His Holiness says. You need wisdom. We need the wisdom to know that what we will do will bring a result. So that's why I think 99% of the time, what we do most of the time is out of our own anger, our own attachment, our own position. So it just ends up being a war. We're all so righteous -- they're righteous, you become righteous -- 'How dare you like the Taliban, how dare you think the Taliban are good!' ...meaningless rubbish. But if saying something could help, hey -- have the courage to say it. How marvelous! But meanwhile, it's your practice. Work on your anger. What else? I mean, isn't it? We've got to be practical. We need to be brave, because part of the time, the good side -- Jan's point about being an angry type of person -- if you channel that energy, it becomes action. And that's what's needed -- action. As Martin Luther King said, 'Then you say, 'What can I do about it?'' You put your money where your mouth is. So the bad side of it -- it can be harmful but the good side of it's action. The good side of patience is you don't harm people, but the bad side of patience is cowardice and passivity. So, a passive -- a patient person is often just passive, they've got to not be passive... an angry person is active, but you see you've got to harness each of them and make them both productive. You get my point. So just being passive, because people are scared -- 'Oh, I don't want to upset anybody,' they say. That's just coming out of cowardice, you know. So coming from the right place is the point, and that's the tough one. That's why, you know, a bird needs two wings, the Buddha says, wisdom and compassion. Compassion is finally the point, that's like the action wing, that's like a visible wing, you put your money where your mouth is. But in order to be compassionate, you need to do it wisely, which is the wisdom wing, which is where you work on yourself, where you put yourself together, so that what you *do* do is beneficial, not just make a mess, you know. Not just be an expression of your own ego. Do you understand? It's tricky... Yes?

The Karma of Tibetans as a Group re: the Chinese Situation

01:14:55

Q: It seems to be a bit of a weird question, but everything makes really sense to me, but when you look at the individual, the karma concept, but when you look like the whole country, like Tibet, I have a hard time to understand why they have to go through all this suffering... it's a really, really terrible thing to them, where these teachings have been for hundreds of years, right? And thousands of monasteries... It's very for me hard...

Ven.: Well, no, it's because, you know, if you can hear the general fundamental principle of karma, everything that happens to any sentient being, good or bad,

okay? -- is necessarily the result of their past action. It's a simple law. One doesn't -- you don't have to believe it, or even initially understand it, but this is the simple law that Buddha -- we all know that laws are fairly simple. If you state the law, you just present the law... he says every sentient being, whoever they might be, whatever they're experiencing, good or bad, as an individual or as one of six million people, is the result of their past actions. So clearly, we do actions individually. But we also do actions as groups, don't we? So Tibetans are a group, aren't they? The Chinese are a group. And then there's one group doing this to that group, isn't there? So, even for a thousand years they've been practicing Buddhism in Tibet, it's true. But it doesn't follow that what they're experiencing as a group now was created as a group of Tibetans. Not at all. Could have been five thousand lives ago. The karma could have been -- who knows? from before this planet. It's highly complex. The Buddha's fundamental point is minds are beginningless -- can't have a first moment, if you have the law of cause and effect, there can't be a first cause -- minds are beginningless, there've been countless... I mean, this is where it doesn't fit at all with our typical materialist view, you know. And that's up to each one of us how far we want to go with this Buddhist view, you understand. Then, all minds are beginningless, there are countless universes, countless experiences, we do things in groups, we do things individually, and everything -- necessarily -- that anybody ever experiences -- necessarily -- ...in other words, everything in every garden is necessarily the fruit of a seed, isn't it? It is necessarily the fruit of a seed, wouldn't you agree? There's nothing in a garden that grows that didn't come from a seed, would you agree? So, there's nothing that anybody experiences that didn't come from a cause from that mind. So if it's called being harmed, you have to deduce that it came from harming in the past. Do you understand my point? Let's get the principles clear first, then you have to see if you can apply them... Go on, what?

Q: ... the things the Tibetans go through now could have been something that happened a million years ago, or something?

Ven.: Well, that's -- that's the logic, to think of, if karma's the right way. If we're taking it as the hypothesis, that would be the conclusion. Of course. But all the good things, too. You see, this is why -- you have to notice, whenever we talk about karma, it's always the bad things. Do you understand my point? No one ever is -- we're not agonizing why people in Missoula are being peaceful and pleasant right now. We just go, 'Well, that's just normal.' But if suddenly somebody came in and multi-murdered and shot twenty people, we'd go on for centuries about it. 'Why?' We'd panic. We'd be freaking out... 'My God, why is this happening...' But no-one's asking the question, 'Why are we sitting in this room peacefully and no-one harming us. We just think this is normal. But it's the result of collective virtue that we're sitting here and no-one's abusing us. We never ask that question. Because why? Because we have this incredible attachment to getting nice things, and assume that when we get it, that it's our right. But if we dare get a bad thing, 'How dare bad things happen.' We don't deserve it. So we assume we deserve good, and we assume we don't deserve bad.

Because we have the view that Mummy made me or God made me, we think it's our God-given right to get happiness, and how dare we get suffering. Do you hear my point? So then we're going to freak out when the suffering comes and greedily grasp at the happiness when *it* comes -- never bother why, who cares why. So Buddha's view is quite a different view. Again, it's one of accountability. Do you understand? Yes?

Experience Similar to the Cause – Illnesses and Past Killing

01:18:59

Q: What type of action is -- results in illness? What type of karma...

Ven.: I understand, darling, yes exactly... Okay -- let me give one example of one action and the four different ways it ripens and it's called 'killing'. So, one of the main -- we can see, generally, if we look at the world, one of the most harmful things we do with our bodies is to kill other beings, wouldn't you agree? It's quite an intense way to harm. And that, in Buddha's view, would be any sentient being.

So, as a result of killing in the past -- those four ways I described -- if it ripens at the time of your death, and it becomes the main karma, it would program your consciousness to cause you to get born in a very suffering type of life like an animal realm or a spirit or something like that. Okay. So we can deduce in our case, it was morality that ripened because we got a human life. And the Buddha would say that in general, getting a human life is the result of morality ripening that particular lot.

But then we look at the next way karma ripens is as a tendency, so the second way killing ripens is as a tendency to kill. Now look at humans -- we might be born humans, our main karma that caused the life itself is morality, but lots of humans kill, don't they? Can you see that? So, lots of humans, due to past killing, are born with the tendency to keep killing.

The third way killing ripens is called as an experience -- which is you get killed or you die young, or you get sick. So anything that's an experience of where -- the opposite to health, or the opposite to the length of life, or the opposite to that, that's the result of harming or killing. Do you understand? It stunts that one. So, generally speaking, sickness -- the elements not working properly, food not being digestible, things harming us instead of nourishing us, this is the result of past killing, in general. That's the answer.

So, for example, the fourth way, environmental karma, would be the very environment itself which is meant to nurture us, nourish us, right? It harms us. Look at people who eat peanuts -- that's a particular environmental karmic result for a person from past killing, where just peanuts will kill them. We've got the collective karma now to have poisoned water, haven't we? More and more -- who drinks water out of rivers anymore? So there's pollution -- polluted water, polluted air... where the elements themselves are harmful to us. That's the result of killing. Do you understand? Make sense?

So then, the point is -- with Buddhist practice -- it's sort of like, the first thing you have to establish is what caused the cancer. Then we have to establish what can I do about it? So, the first we have to establish is: look at my life, look at my garden, and see where all the problems are, and then know what caused it, and

then decide practically, well, do I want this one and this one? Well, no, I don't, so what can I do about it? How can I change it? How can work with it and try and purify it and, two things: not do it again, the first one -- okay, Lama Zopa says, 'In the Second Noble Truth' (of the Four Noble Truths; this is one of these many packagings of Buddha's teachings, okay?) ...'in the Second Noble Truth, the Buddha States the causes of suffering'. And he narrows it down to two main causes: past action (karma) and then on the basis of that, the delusion. Sorry -- the karma was based upon a delusion. So, they subsume down to the mind. Delusions are the main cause of everything...and then they cause us to do the negative action.

So, in relation to the two causes of suffering, karma and delusions, the most immediate, the most urgent thing, urgent practice, as Rinpoche puts it, is to at least refrain from creating more negative karma in day-to-day life. So, if someone punches your nose, you get hurt... you at least protect your mind not to create more. And that's our ongoing, everyday practice, like watching like a hawk every minute. This is obviously important.

But the second one is in relation to karma, for all the countless past seeds we've already got -- which was your question -- all sitting in our mind right now, trillions of lives, Buddha says, trillions of causes for the most intense suffering, from negative lives -- and there's nothing, Buddha says, that any of us haven't done countless times -- join the club, we're all the same. All those seeds are sitting there latent, waiting for the appropriate conditions to ripen as one's suffering, so one has to get ahead of the game. That's what purification is -- pull the mothers out, quick as possible. You understand? The garden analogy is a good one. You look at the mess, you check up what the bloody hell caused this and why that weed and why this and why aren't the flowers growing... look at all the suffering, look at all the good things. You make an assessment: this is my garden; you don't curse and swear the next-door neighbor didn't do it properly, it's your garden, please, whatever's in it's yours. You check the things you don't like, you try to establish what the causes were. At least, you don't do more of it and you better pull them all out as quick as possible. And then you try to grow the virtuous karma. That's life; that's what practice is -- purify negative karma and try to grow the virtuous karma. In a simple way, that's it. It's a very practical thing. You understand. That's what it is. That's what practice is -- daily life. Avoiding harming, That's why the very first level of practice -- it's like junior school, high school -- and even His Holiness said that recently -- the Tibetans have this 'package', called the *lam rim*. It's just this old-fashioned, medieval phrase for what we would simply call, a 'course', as His Holiness put it. I like to use this term, too. Like in your education system: you're in junior school, high school, university, like this.

So there's the very first level of practice, the Tibetans, they call it the 'Lower Scope' of practice. It's simply the basic level where you control your body and speech. You don't harm. You try to control your body, and you control your speech. Don't say the bad words. Don't do the negative action. You're mainly concerned with your body and speech, which is beginning to control at least not doing more negative things. That's the first level, junior school level of practice.

This is full time practice. In other words, behave nicely, like your Grandma told you, you know?

Then you go to high school, now you start working on your mind. Now you become your own therapist and you begin to get to the root of the problems. Do you understand? And then you get to the compassion wing and you really proactively now become beneficial to others. So it's just this gradual stage-by-stage according to our own capacities how we practice. It's very down to earth actually, very grounded, very psychological. Because we read it and we see all this Asian terminology and medieval language, we mystify it. And because we hear it as religion, we don't quite see the practical application of it sometimes, you know? Yes, sweetheart?

Challenging Situations as 'Wake-up Call'

01:25:29 Q: From what I understand, it's often more beneficial to have a lot of challenging events come into your life rather than have things go smoothly... so, would the Buddha still consider those challenging events be the results of negative karma if somebody sees them as good....

Ven.: Basically, this is what I was going to say before but you've given me the perfect opportunity to say it. The very first thing is we've got to look at the garden and see all the weeds. So they're the bad things that happen in our life. So, yes, of course -- the weeds are there because you didn't take care of them properly. The suffering comes because you created negative karma. Now -- that's first. You have to establish what the cause of it is. Then, if we're really together, we're going to then see it as a challenge. And that's what's fantastic. That's a more advanced level of practice. If the world did this, sweetheart, we'd all be enlightened by now. If suffering can be seen as good, from this perspective, it doesn't mean, 'Oh, I should keep wanting suffering.' No. But given that you haven't pulled those weeds out, let's use them as a challenge and 'wake-up call' and...you understand my point? It's surely better to not have to have the challenge. But we're so attached to getting things 'nice', that we need a wake-up call sometimes. And it is -- it's the result of our negative karma, of course it is. But aren't we fortunate that we can see it as a wake-up call.

One of my friends in prison who practiced -- they said it's almost one of their mantras -- 'It's been my wake-up call'. But how intelligent -- thinking about impermanence -- okay -- we won't ever think about impermanence until we get cancer. Then, it's the most massive wake-up call. You can't believe. You become this 'best practitioner' because now you nearly died. But you don't have to wait until you have a car accident or cancer to think about impermanence. Impermanence is true, so think about it beforehand. That's the Buddha's approach. Be intelligent. Get ahead of the game. Give yourself a wake-up call by thinking about impermanence, so that when death does come, it's no shock to us.

But given that we haven't done this, then yes, it can be a wake-up call. How fortunate we are to use it in this way. But more intelligent not to need the wake-up call. Do you get my point?

BREAK.....

The Bardo

00:01 Q: Could you speak to everything you've just said in relationship to the *bardo*?

Ven.: What do you mean, darling?

Q: Well, there's this concept in Tibetan Buddhism that at the moment of death -- it's called 'transitioning the *bardo*' -- the *bardo* plane -- and you have -- at the instant of death there is the possibility for release if you have done your work. But if not, you travel...

Ven.: Where did you get all this from?

Q: The '*Tibetan Book of the Dead*'.

Ven.: Okay. So, the Buddhist approach would be -- the Tibetan as you say, but it's coming from India. It's coming all the way from Buddhism in India -- so the idea is: your consciousness, as it goes through the death process, and, you know -- the earth element ceases, and the water element ceases, and your various states of mind cease and you get to the level where you stop breathing, the mind gets more subtle and more subtle and more subtle and you throw off all the kind of external physical conditions, and eventually the mind leaves the body. So, of course, a person who's a highly evolved practitioner, having practiced in that life, probably having realized emptiness, probably having bodhicitta, probably being a highly realized person, I mean, from phenomenal work in that life, not just an ordinary person; first of all, they've got control over their death process, and the greatest of the great practitioners -- this is how they talk in the Tantric system, in the most advanced level -- the greatest of great practitioners, having practiced all their life -- if not countless others -- have control, complete control over the process of death, and then can meditate in the very subtle level of their mind where most of us -- it's like, this process, it's physiologically and psychologically the same as sleep. So the great yogis are able to utilize their sleep process, they can go with complete control into the state of dreams, they can use their mind at that level, they can go to the state of very subtle mind, they've got complete control, they're highly advanced. So people like that have complete control and can therefore bypass having to be propelled by the force of their past karma to then be -- wake up in this 'mini-life' which is just like a dream state, the *bardo* is exactly the same as a dream state, just more intense because you've left the body, you know.

And then, because they're able to control the process, they're able to actually even get the highest realizations and therefore control what happens to them. It's the greatest of great practitioners who can do this. 99.999% of us just practice morality, die well, go to the *bardo*, get a decent future life, you know. You understand. The really developed practitioners can control the process. That's all. That's it. Do you understand my point? Yes?

We're Creating and Ripening Karma Every Microsecond

03:12 Q: Does the consciousness that moves from lifetime to lifetime -- is that a ...collection of seeds or is it -- ah ...

Ven.: It's a collection of seeds or a bunch of programming....

Q: So, what happens, say for example in this life, like if a karmic seed has ripened, or a number of karmic seeds have ripened over a lifetime, that consciousness that moves on, it is based on those seeds that are left in the consciousness....

Ven.: Every microsecond that you're existing -- so, what's your name?

Q: Helen.

Ven.: Okay. So here we have Helen. We can deduce that Helen is a human being. It looks like you're a human being, right? You're a female human being, and you're a sentient being. So that means you're a mind possessor. So we can deduce you have consciousness. We can't see it because it's not physical. So we can deduce because you're walking and talking and your body is not smelly yet that you're an alive human being. Which means you're a sentient being. Okay. Which means you're a mind possessor. So your consciousness, every microsecond right now it's working. Every second, you're doing something, thinking something, feeling something, assuming something. Each second, you're programming your mind, aren't you? Every second you're programming your mind. Every second you're programming your mind. Using their terminology, every second, you're sowing a karmic seed. Every second, you're sowing a karmic seed. This is a way of saying it, for whatever we do, say and think that leaves imprints in the mind. So this is your consciousness. If you tracked it back, just logically going back, each second, each second, you get back to the first moment of conception, wouldn't you? Then you have to go back to a moment before that. And it's the same continuity of mind. And then a previous life, and a previous life and you go back a million lives. So we can deduce that there's this particular tracking of consciousness that at this moment in time is labeled 'Helen' on the basis of this particular human form. So that consciousness will continue to program it, program it, program it, and it leaves this body, and program, program, and takes another body, program, program -- so it just keeps going. The Buddha says we're usually not in charge of this process, because we think everybody else does it to us, it's not my fault, and how dare? and all this business...but if you're really in charge of this business, you're cleaning up your act. You're stopping programming your mind -- as best you can -- with more negativity. You're trying to program your mind with positivity, and you're pulling out all the seeds you've already grown -- hopefully this is your spiritual procedure -- until eventually you've cleaned up your mind completely and now you're an enlightened being. Do you see what I'm saying? This is a way of saying it.

It's just that part of our trouble is, is the terminology, you know? Because it's Asian -- number one, and number two -- it's medieval. So you even translate

Tibetan Buddhism perfectly, Sanskrit you translate perfectly, it's still like double Dutch -- all due respect to Dutch people, I'm sorry -- you understand my point because it's the, the structure and the language that we use. So for me, like using more contemporary, like programming, you know. It's a very -- you get the idea a bit. Why I use the example of piano playing... we understand really karma -- every time you learn anything -- that's what karma is. You're programming your mind with music, with math or with anger and jealousy, you understand. So that's the person you become, isn't it? So, whatever you do, say and think is the person you become.

Q: So, it is a collection that keeps on going from lifetime to lifetime until you...

Ven.: ...cleaned up all the rubbish and grown up all the good. That's it. Precisely. That's it. That's what the process of -- quote, unquote -- becoming enlightened is all about. That's the Buddhist way of putting it. You understand. We're communicating, right?

Q: And every microsecond, we're experiencing the ripening of karma, and creating more.

Ven.: Precisely. That's exactly right. That's exactly right. That's exactly the point. Every microsecond is the fruit of a past one, and on the basis of this we do more. So that's why we've got to get ahead of the game. Stop creating the negative ones, clean up our act, control body and speech, clean up the mind, rip out the negative ones from the mind so we quit that, and then grow the positive ones, and that finally eventually will be a mind that's now completely what they call 'enlightened' -- fully developed in goodness and completely rid of badness. That's what it is and that's where we're heading. So it's not a random thing... if one is in charge of the process, it's not a random thing at all. You're really on track with it and you know what you're doing. You know what to do, what to say, what to think, what not to do, what not to say, what not to think, what seeds to sow, and you just keep on bopping... yes...and in broad terms that would answer your question. Yes?

Subtle Body

08:29 Ven.: Yes? Mark... Tom... Fred... What's his name again? Tom. Tom, Fred, Mark, Joe...(laughter) All I know about you is that you're Deanna's roommate... cellarmate... cellmate... that's the one! Go on, Tom...

Q: His Holiness was talking about this last week...I heard him say that we have this subtle mind that goes from life to life and he said we also have a subtle body that goes from life to life.

Ven.: That's right...that's all good... all these words... okay, okay...

Q: He was very emphatic about that...subtle body...

Ven.: Okay, okay...okay, So, as His Holiness said, there are different ways of presenting Buddhism. You've got the Hinayana approach, you've got the

Mahayana, and then you have the Tantrayana, which is sort of like, for me, it's like calling it the Hinayana's junior school and high school, the Mahayana's university and the Tantra's like post-graduate, okay. So in the Tantric model, there's a different way of describing the world... it's the same law of karma... so what we basically – the universe from this point of view, consists of two types of phenomena, simply speaking: matter and minds. Matter is made up of the four elements, well, he uses just one, called 'space'. I don't quite get 'space', but never mind that, this is how the old-fashioned one like Galileo and that mob back then they all used the same model, it's called the 'four elements'. Okay? So, this physical world is made up of four elements: earth, air, fire, water. That's it.

So -- and this body is coming from this physical world. This body is the physical world, would you agree? The four elements here are of the same nature as the four elements out there, wouldn't you agree. You can't distinguish between, you know, cabbages and our body, from the point of view of being elements, because we're part of this physical world.

But then you've got minds... and some of the elements are imbued with a consciousness. And in our case, our elements, the same as the cabbages and tomatoes, it's different insofar as these elements are imbued with a consciousness. That's why this is called a sentient being and a cabbage is not. First point.

So those four elements, that's just what the universe is made up of -- and as His Holiness said one time, 'Big Bang? No problem. Just not the first Big Bang, that's all.' So, at the beginning of the universe was the very subtle wind energy. And then due to various causes and conditions -- which is the collective karma of trillions of beings, that is to say: us and all of us who've occupied this planet -- it slowly began to take shape in the form of, you know, galaxies and moons and stars and volcanoes and dinosaurs and Lord-knows-what, okay? So that's the physical world. The main driver of this is not a creator. It's not merely those elements, but it's the collective karma of sentient beings.

Okay...so, His Holiness even implied this very briefly -- he just said it so quickly one would miss it. But Lama Zopa said one time that in the Kalachakra Tantra, in fact in the Tantras -- the way they use this term, the way they use the word 'sutra'; it's used as a term in relation to a type of teaching, but it's also referred to as a text. 'Tantra's' the same; it's a type of teaching and practice, but also there are 'Tantras', the name of a text, okay, different texts.

So in the Kalachakra Tantras, there are these very -- Rinpoche says -- very detailed explanations of the intimate relationship between the internal and external world. So the external world in general -- in Buddhist terms -- means the four elements and the internal world refers to mind, okay? So, roughly speaking as Rinpoche said, when the mind is out of balance, and is deluded, negative, that impacts upon the physical elements which in turn impacts upon the external elements and so thus the result being volcanoes and all the rest. So, there's this intimate relationship between the elements and mind. Now, in relation to this, we've got gross consciousness, which we've already talked about; gross

consciousness, subtle consciousness, most -- he called it most subtle -- sometimes they call it very subtle -- most subtle consciousness. Then each of those levels of our mind -- same mind, just different levels of capacity for cognition -- you've got a certain level of physicality and they're inextricably linked.

So for the gross level, we have gross mind, which is the sensory and the conceptual and the emotional, which is what we think exists in the west. That's it, right? And that's inextricably linked with our gross body, isn't it? You wouldn't have 'eye consciousness' if you didn't have an eyeball. You wouldn't have 'tactile' without the body. You wouldn't have certain conceptual states of mind without the brain. So, the mind is the mind, but the body is the body, but they're inextricably linked, they work together. You get my point.

But then, you've got subtle consciousness and subtle body, as they call it -- subtle body. Technically not a body in the way we refer, but this is the term they use. So now, we don't even posit that as existing in our culture, you know... we only posit the very gross level. So the subtle consciousness -- the only time we ever experience this, for most of us -- is when we dream, right? There's this weird wacko world of strange experiences: you leave your body, you go flying here and there, you have sort of clairvoyant experiences, kind of a weird, wonderful world, isn't it? And there's no real agreement in any of the models of the mind in our materialist world about this subtle level -- it's weird, you know? But this fits perfectly, it's explained precisely in all the Tantric explanations which is coming from India, which is now mainly known as Tibetan Buddhism, but it's coming right from the Indian tradition, it's coming right back, you know?

And that's the same model that the Tibetan medical system uses. So you go to your Tibetan doctor, they're feeling your pulses. They're feeling your subtle physical energies, and they say that 'subtle body' quote unquote is made up of 72,000 subtle channels, nervous system, the subtle wind energies, or the *prana* that courses through those channels, and then all your various states of mind that -- as they quote it, 'rides' on those winds, how they talk about it. And so then when they're feeling -- it's like the Chinese system a bit -- when they feel your pulses they can feel all the different subtler physical energies and they know because of their study, the relationship of those particular wind energies with anger, with jealousy, with this karma, so they can then determine what's going on at this subtle level. So they give you your herbal medicine, which'll adjust your physical energies, which then help you calm that part of your mind down. So there's your subtle body. That's your subtle body, it's made up of the kundalini, the red and white physical drops, the gross aspect of which is the red and white energies of the male and female -- the blood and the sperm. And then you've got the wind energies and the subtle nervous system. And they call it 'subtle body' because if you get a microscope, you can't see it, but they can deduce the presence of it. This is the Tibetan medical system. It's based on this model, okay?

So then, you've got 'very subtle consciousness', and that is inextricably linked with the 'very subtle body', as they call it, but it just means a very subtle physical energy which is the 'wind' element. The wind element is the subtlest of these

four. So the process of death, you're gradually deconstructing: earth element ceases, the capacity for knowing many things, the various states of mind; then your water element ceases, and the fire element, then the air element. And each stage of that is your certain levels of mental state. Then by the time you get to the physical -- you stop being breathing, you're ready for the body bag in our culture -- but you're not dead yet. You should leave that body for a couple more days, because you're going through this more subtle deconstruction of the subtler levels of mind, and the subtler physical energies until eventually you deconstruct all the way down to very subtle consciousness and very subtle wind energy or 'body' as they call it.

And this is the building blocks of the next person and all the karma that had ripened before you even stopped breathing is now implanted there, programmed, you're basically programmed, they even call this 'indestructible consciousness'. And he said this very clearly in the teachings, he said they're 'inextricably linked' together as one entity, although -- he gave all these teachings on the second day about tantra, and if you'd heard this before you might have noticed it, if not you probably missed it. Doesn't matter... I mean not that I got that much... I don't know who's laughing, but it's true... Anyway -- this very subtle wind energy and the very subtle mind are inextricably linked, you can't separate them. You can't have one without the other. But they are separate in the sense that one is physical and one is mental. So that's the fundamental building blocks of our being, and they're then programmed by your karma that leaves the body and then finds its way through the intermediate state -- like a dream state -- into the new mummy and daddy, then it joins with the egg and sperm and off you go again. So, does that answer your question? Okay, good.

If the Body Bag Comes too Quickly...

17:36 Q: If there isn't enough time after the point of death...

Ven.: To do what?

Q: ...for this process to take place...

Ven.: What process?

Q: If the body bag comes too quickly?

Ven.: Yeah, not very helpful -- best to leave the body alone...

Q: But if that does happen...

Ven.: It can disturb the person's mind, yes...

Q: So, any inkling about what happens next?

Ven.: Yes, of course, I mean -- it's -- okay... the Buddhist approach would say that the most important thing is that if you practice in daily life, you're aware death is coming, you're aware of impermanence, you've practiced giving up killing and lying and stealing; you keep your vows, you live a good life, you

program yourself so that when death does come, you die happy. You're cool... you're not shocked, you're not freaking out, and you're ready for it and death is a very blissful experience. Even if you die quickly. Even if they make a mess of your body, you'll still be -- morality would have ripened, you'll be okay because you programmed your mind so nicely. So death's a problem when you have never thought of impermanence, you freak out at the time of death -- and most people freak out at the time of death because they're clinging so desperately -- we spend our bloody lives killing the ants and the rats and the roaches and bad-mouthing our husband and sleeping with the girlfriend, we haven't practiced, we've never bothered with any of it and we're having a mental breakdown at the time of death... then they rip the plug out and chuck us in the body bag... I mean, what do you expect's going to happen? Lower realms, baby... So...

Q: ...that would solve the overpopulation problem...

Ven.: Hah.... But it doesn't ... we just keep getting more, dear... I mean, you just got to... I mean, it can be disturbing... especially if they're freaking out when they die, most people do. And the mind at the time of death, it's really important for it to be peaceful, you see, because peaceful states of mind -- we can check this from our own experience, have a natural relationship with virtuous states of mind. Our minds are peaceful when they're virtuous, when there's no fear. Our minds are freaking out when there's fear, and that's got a natural relationship with non-virtue. So when the mind is freaking out at the time of death, and it's disturbed -- you know, put in the body bag too soon, you know, doing whatever -- or just disturbed because you didn't die well -- then that activates the negative karmic seeds to ripen which will then program your mind to take a suffering life. So as much as possible, the Buddhist one is to try and, you know, if someone dies, leave them there for two days. Don't call the hospital. Just leave them. That's the Buddhist approach. Then you call the doctor two days later, you know. That's the ideal scenario. But on the other hand, if a person dies peacefully and well, especially too -- I've heard all the lamas say, you know, that if you, say, you've donated your organs, and they've got to keep you while you're nice and warm, they don't want to leave you two days. You're going to all rot and then the organ's no good, right? So they want to grab you as soon as possible -- but I've heard all the lamas say, just that incredible compassion of wanting to offer your body to others, that programs your mind so nicely that you'll have no problem. Do you understand? Because of your compassion...no problem. You'll die a very blissful death. Yes?

The Preciousness of Our Human Rebirth

20:31 Q: Earlier you were talking about...coming as a human...the seeds have ripened, you've got high morality...

Ven.: As a result of the practice of morality and goodness and keeping vows is why we get this particular life; us wanting to practice more and more spiritual, for example...yes, in general, even an ordinary human life is the result of a lot of morality...

Q: ...if we come back as a dog, does that mean that we...I mean, in my mind I don't see that necessarily as a lower form...?

Ven.: I understand. I understand. Okay. Where that fits is this. Would you agree -- as nice as dogs are -- would you agree they're not very bright? I mean, you have a talk about developing compassion, they don't really get it. You try to explain emptiness to them, they're a bit thick. You try to teach them piano, I mean they're just like a bit limited. I mean, I'm not being rude about dogs...okay. So, if you want to be born -- I put it this way -- if you want a really long neck, best to be a giraffe. Guaranteed. If you want to fly, be a bird. But, honey, if you want to work with your mind, and have a few more options, probably best to be a human. So, it's a contextual thing. It's not high or low or some kind of hierarchy -- it's just reasonable from that point of view. So, you know, well, it's an interesting point -- Lama Zopa Rinpoche said one time, he said if just for a couple of minutes, you could have a direct experience of the mind of your little cute doggy-woggy, the suffering, the mental suffering of the most profound ignorance of that mind would be so intense, you'd never want to waste another second of your precious human life. That's the ordinary ignorance of an animal's mind. Now, we don't think this way in our culture, I agree. But just think about it -- it's a different way to look at what ignorance is. Ignorance is fear. We all have ignorance. Ignorance is the term for this ego-grasping that's this panic state that rises as soon as we're attacked or insulted or hurt or don't get what we want or even if -- you understand -- this fear rises. Well, animals live in that one. They don't have another -- they can't put two and two... Your dog has been living in your house for years, and it barks every time it hears the gate squeak. By now you'd think he would have learned he knows it's the gate squeaking. But he doesn't, the poor thing, because he's paranoid. His big eyes are round, he's barking like crazy...his unhappy mind, honey, is called fear, and fear is ignorance. So if you think of it this way, without being mean to dogs... Because Buddhist psychology refers to all living beings, not just humans... do you understand my point? Okay...

Different Components in the Same Recipe

23:27 Q: On the same vein, looking at people who have, say, developmental disabilities and very limited mental ability and yet lovely, compassionate actions... is that still precious human rebirth?

Ven.: I understand... if you look at every person, we can see, we're just this sort of recipe, with different components in the same recipe, in a way...some people got more love, some less love. Some more intelligence, some less intelligence... the person you just described is a person who doesn't have much intelligence -- got certain of those missing -- but lots of kind and sweet. Equally, you've got some people who've got not much intelligence who are angry and paranoid and violent and schizophrenic and psychotic. So, it's up to which bits are in the recipe. Some are intelligent *and* psychotic. So, we've all got different... all based

on habits we've practiced. So, you know, having the intelligence -- which is meaning the ability to put two and two together and make choices and practice morality and distinguish between good and bad and all those things -- that's the crucial component that we do need as a human, isn't it, that makes our human life worthwhile.

So, you can be a genius, but if you haven't got this, you're in big trouble. It's this practicing of morality that is the one we do need most. So, we need intelligence to do this, which is an ability to discriminate between this and that. So, to have that capacity is a very marvelous thing. So if you don't have it, obviously you've missed out on practicing that one. But you might have the virtue to be taken care of, you might be very kind and sweet and loving, and people look after you, and you're the sweetest wonderful person. That's fine. But you can't do much with your mind, though. You can't do much changing.

Q: Could you have a good rebirth because of this virtue?

Ven.: Yeah, because you're not harming others, maybe... But the intelligence is the key distinguishing factor between us and an animal, but variations of it in humans, which is the ability to observe things with morality: make sense, this is good, this is bad, this hurts others and this kind of thing -- it's the sense of interdependence with people, you know. Do you understand? Yes?

Mind is Innately Pure

25:33 Q: So, the bottom line is though, that our innate consciousness whether it is after we've removed our defilements or if we've happened to have removed our defilements in a past life or whatever, is that of love and compassion...

Ven.: That's it... That's the bottom line... That's exactly right, that's the point. So the Buddha's saying, you know, that mind -- you always hear the words, they talk about that mind is innately pure. As you said, innate consciousness... and this needs really thinking about, not just believe it as a nice cute idea. There's some real logic to this, you know. But one has to think about all this. We can talk about it, perhaps.

The fundamental nature of our mind is pure. Which doesn't mean we were pure once and lost the plot, like Adam and Eve. Not like that. I like to put it this way: that what we think of when we say 'water', we know we mean by 'water' this pure, clear stuff, isn't it -- two bits of H and one bit of O. It's just naturally pure, isn't it? But we know it can be polluted. Right? Well, our mind, if you like, you could say actually, the point's good -- that the H₂O of our mind is simply goodness -- compassion, love. Because they -- okay, okay --

Going to the wisdom side, the Buddha said one way of talking about how things simply exist -- and we're going to be talking about this tomorrow, aren't we? Dependent arising, yeah, okay, we'll go into this now a bit. The way things exist, the way things just naturally *are*, from the wisdom point of view, is that things exist interdependently. Interdependently. Things are dependent arisings, is the

way they term it in Buddhism. Things exist interdependently. Now, you look at how, say, Helen and I are having a chat, and we're being friendly to each other. So that would mean, I'm listening to her jokes, and she laughs at my jokes, and I sympathize with her constipation and she sympathizes with my sinus troubles and 'Oh, really, Robina...' We're listening to each other and being kind and loving, right? Ordinary things. Well, you could say that love and compassion at this moment in time are prevalent. Wouldn't you agree? Love is: 'May Helen be happy.' And compassion is: 'May she not suffer.' Just naturally she has that in her mind towards me and I have it towards her. Ordinary daily experience. So now, you check that. There's kindness and love there, but look what's happening; there's a sense of 'we' there. There's a sense of interdependence, wouldn't you agree? We're in tune with each other, it's harmonious, it's working nicely, right? Wouldn't you agree with this?

So that means -- without thinking it -- we are in touch with interdependence to some extent. We're just naturally in touch with it. So love and compassion and all the virtues are to some extent in sync with reality, which is that things are interdependent. When love and compassion are prevalent, you're in touch with interdependence, you get my point?

Now look what happens when we get upset. She says something I don't like; suddenly, I'm angry with her and she's angry with me and she's looking miserable and crying and I'm upset. Suddenly, where has the 'we' gone? It's been cut in half. There's now two separate unhappy neurotic 'me's', aren't there? And look what's happening now -- everything's all jagged and miserable and disharmonious, because now ego and delusions have taken over. Anger and jealousy and resentment have now taken over and they are the opposite to interdependence. They are not in touch with reality. They believe in self-existent 'me' as being harmed by mean, self-existent Helen: 'How dare she do that to me!' All the rubbish of ego is the opposite of interdependence. Can you hear what I'm saying? ...in sort of an easy-going way.

So, virtues are the very H₂O of our mind. Love and compassion are the actual substance of our mind, if you want to put it this way. And the delusions, which are the voices of ego, are the pollution. And that's what causes all the pain, all the suffering, all the dramas, all the separate 'me's', all running around, all these separate me's all fighting for our spaces, right? Do you understand? So our natural state, yes, finally.... The word 'Buddha' or the word certainly in Tibetan '*sang gye*' for 'Bud-dha', the first syllable, '*sang*' implies the complete removal of all the pollution, you know -- all the nonsense, all the delusions and all the causes of suffering, all the ego-rubbish. And the syllable '*gye*' -- for 'dha', the second syllable -- implies the complete -- now, finally -- the complete development of all the goodness. And that goodness is the H₂O that's at the core of our being. That's who we really are, Buddha says. And so our goal is to finally rid the mind of the pollution so what's left is all the goodness. That's it. That's Buddhahood. That's enlightenment. And it's a psychological thing, not some mystical thing in the sky, you know? And it's linked to reality. This is the point. The wisdom and compassion completely have to come together. Because when you've fully accomplished the compassion wing, you have to have accomplished

the wisdom wing, which eradicated all the misconceptions, all the voices of ego, all the ignorance, all the anger, all the jealousy, all the pride. All the pollution is gone completely so your mind is in sync with the universe, quite literally.

They also say there's no sense of a separate self -- His Holiness mentioned this. There's no sense of subject/object. Right now, we have a universe full of a trillion separate 'I's', don't we? And occasionally we come together and are nice to each other. But that only goes so far, you know? You understand my point...so when you realize emptiness, When you've eradicated the lie of ignorance, and perfected that, and cultivated the compassion wing, it's as if now -- you have a sense of who you are -- but your sense of 'I' now -- you could put it this way -- is as big as the universe. You identify with every other living being. You do not have a sense of being separate. I know it sounds kind of cosmic, but it's the literal truth, they say. Yes?

The Use of Antidepressants

31:14 Q: Okay, if you have these delusions of depression and anger and ...what do you say about the assistance of chemical ... will this in fact assist people to see...

Ven.: Yes, yes, of course, if you use it this way... If you've got the typical materialist view, that depression *is* the chemical imbalance, and when you take your Prozac you've removed your depression...I'm just saying, so then you're mistaken... because the minute you stop your Prozac, you're back to the depression.

The Buddhist approach would be: take your Prozac, honey, which is exactly the same as taking your Tibetan herbal medicine -- it's the same thing. Your Tibetan doctor sees the relationship between body and mind. He knows depression is internalized aversion, internalized anger, but it's triggered by an imbalance of those wind energies that are connected to it. Like if you've got super anxiety, you know, that's called '*lung*' in Tibetan. '*Lung*' means 'wind'. It's a particular imbalance of certain wind energies that's linked to attachment energy -- which is all the control freakiness and wants to get things done and anxious and worried and neurotic...look at us all, we're all having panic attacks every day, you know.

So, when you take your Tibetan medicine or your Prozac, it just simply works on the physical aspect -- which gives your mind space, now, to really work on that. So if you're being a Buddhist, take your Prozac, no problem. But the Buddhist approach would be: then you've got more space now to work on the mind, to see your mind more clearly, because you're out of the fog, you know. Of course, the trouble with most of the Western medicines, they've often got side effects; they bring other problems. Not always. The Tibetan ones -- the herbs -- just are herbs, they work much more subtly. But it's the same principle, because we are body and mind...you see, mind is the main point -- but you can't say the body doesn't play a role. That's foolish.

If you're out in the sun, and you're boiling hot and you're going to faint from a fever, or you're just fainting from a fever, it's physical, right? But look what it

does to your mind -- you hallucinate, because your physical body's gone berserk. So, you can't say body doesn't play a role... change the physical conditions, you give your mind space. But in the West, we only think it's the physical, that's all. You get my point? So use whatever methods we can. Take your Prozac, please, if it helps you get reasonable. Be sensible.

Q: I heard yesterday that Tibetan medicine would now be more available in the West...

Ven.: Oh, I have no idea, well, I know there's one doctor from Dharamsala who's been working for years in New York and doing experiments with regular doctors and all the kinds of tests that people do, you know, it's a bit rigorous, but, yeah, more and more people are taking these things, like Chinese herbs, isn't it? Much more acceptable these days and more people are training in the Tibetan medical system...yeah. Yes?

Be Aware of Your Mind to Prevent Causing Yourself Future Problems

34:14 Q: So, the idea is, like..the action is the equivalent of an expression of something ...we'll talk about in the negative sense, then, what happens is that you bring your awareness to that negative expression and keep kind of moving back off of action, so in other words, what's ultimately happening is you're able to be aware of the...just the arising of the negative...so that you're not even sowing a seed....

Ven.: That's really advanced...The first step is this -- that's the idea -- the first step is this: the very first step is we control our body and speech, you know. If you've got strong attachment to alcohol, we all know perfectly well, you can't possibly give up attachment while you keep drinking alcohol. So you want to back away from the object. So we can see, the very first level is you control the physical. You keep yourself out of the way of people who make you very angry. You keep out of the way of things that make your attachment berserk. I mean we don't even understand this in our culture. You know, look at ordinary relationships. I just think our romantic notions are so ridiculous. You assume you're supposed to marry somebody, go live in the same bed in the same house for the rest of your life with this person. The biggest number of murders are domestic. I mean I'm not surprised... you understand my point...

It's too much to expect of ordinary people with anger and attachment and jealousy to live in the same bed and the same room in the same small house -- cause people are poor -- and not expect problems! I mean, we just think, 'Oh, I'm a bad person, I fight with my husband, I'm supposed to love him, you know...'. It's too much to expect of ordinary people. You understand my point? I think it's insane! I mean it blows my mind...do you hear what I'm saying? If ordinary people realized: I've got attachment, I'm angry, I'm going to get married, yes, but let's have two separate rooms...Who would think that? You'd get divorced straight away because, 'You don't love me, dear!'

But it's common sense that you'd be aware of your mind. You'd be aware of your dangerous area, so you protect yourself from causing problems. But most people

-- you understand what I'm saying -- in the first level of practice, you learn to be aware, and you control the physical environment. This is already so mature. It's unbelievable. Half of all the problems on earth would not exist if we could all do this. Do you hear my point? Then, once you've harnessed your body and speech -- and that's where all the vows are at the very first level -- you take vows not to lie, steal, bad-mouth, run around with somebody else's partner, and vows are very powerful -- this helps you enormously. Just control your body and speech. If we can just control our body and speech, this earth would be a blissful place. And the reason -- in the very first level of Buddhist practice -- the reason to control your body and speech is not because 'Buddha says so'. It's not because you're supposed to be a good person. It's because killing and lying and sexual misconduct harm *you*.

So, it's like you see this is the first level of controlling yourself. Control your body and speech. Then you're so together...now you can go to high school, now you can be your own therapist. You can learn concentration meditation and you can begin to develop this *amazing* skill to see this insane asylum in there that's usually controlling your body and speech. And that's where you really become a Buddhist. You become your own therapist. You get some concentration, you step back from the chaos. You're seeing the thoughts and feelings and emotions. You're identifying what they are. It's a super-sophisticated job to do, you know? I mean, even Western psychology says there's a thousand thoughts a second. That's what Buddha's saying... We don't notice our thoughts now until they're completely screaming out loud. Do you understand my point?

But to be able to step back and develop this introspective technique, and step back from your mind so you can begin to *hear* the chaos, and slowly start to unravel it, and begin to put words to the voices, and then, *then* -- the skill to actually argue with ego's crazy voices -- and your wisdom will argue with them -- this is where you do the reconstructing. So, it's a really full-on job, you know. This is the day-to-day job.

Q: But it's also kind of replacing the language of your mind...the words in your mind...

Ven.: Totally, totally. It totally is. This is what I'm saying. The wisdom in you and the skill in you and the kindness and the patience and the intelligence and the compassion and the love voices are arguing with the attachment and the anger and the depression and the jealousy, the low self-esteem voices, which at the moment run the show. So you're having this internal argument with yourself; you're being your own therapist, quite literally. So -- and it's a struggle; my habit in my life was to say whatever I felt the moment I felt it. Even the first years of being a Buddhist, I didn't believe it was possible to change anger...it just takes time, you know.

So you've got to be really full-on, really courageous, because one of the first -- okay, they describe the concentration technique meditation in terms of nine stages. And most of us aren't even at the first stage in any concentration we do. But they say one of the first -- well, maybe we've begun it -- one of the first

consequences of beginning to concentrate, beginning to watch your breath, is you start to see the chaos; so therefore you think you're getting worse. But you're not getting worse; you're just seeing it for the first time. And this is a good sign. And we can't even cope with this; we can't cope with seeing any negativity – we want to go kill ourselves, you know. So you've got to be very courageous to do this job, because you're going to hear an awful lot of shit in there, excuse me. Which we normally blame everybody else for...but to get to this point where you want to see it and it's yours and you want to own it and understand it, you know -- it's already pretty profound.

So part of this process -- a crucial part -- is that we've got to learn to live with this. We've got all these crazy roommates, you know; one's called anger, one's jealousy, one's depression, one's low self-esteem; so up until now we've identified with these crazy roommates. We've got to start identifying with love and wisdom and kindness, and we've got to learn to live with the crazy ones...not wish they'd go away, not hate them, not want to kill ourselves because of it; but learn to know they're not permanent -- they are *there*, because we've practiced them -- but they're not permanent and we can change. Then you're more brave; you learn to deal with all the rubbish and live with it every day knowing you can control it and change it...do you understand?

Because our attachment just wants it all to be nice; you think, 'Oh, I'm a spiritual practitioner, I should be good now.' ...Does it make sense what I'm saying? We've got to be courageous, you know, and see them all -- or as one of my friends -- a therapist -- says, 'It's having your hands in your own shit.' I prefer to call it 'tasting your own vomit'. It is that. It is that, actually. So you've got to really be courageous. All these clichéd ideas of being a spiritual practitioner, being all lovey-dovey and mindful and sweet and walking slowly...excuse me. If that's Buddhism, I don't want to know...it's boring, I'm not interested, thank you very much.

That's why I like the Dalai Lama as an example; he's funny and practical, he walks fast and talks fast, he smiles, he's great! Good example.what else, folks?

'Throwing' Karma and 'Completion' Karma

41:45 Q: Could you talk about throwing and completion?

Ven.: Who?

Q: Throwing and completion karma?

Ven.: You mean the main one? The one that gives you the life? You mean the cause of your life? What do you mean 'talk about it'?

Q: Well, when she was talking about the -- you know, being born human, but having incomplete faculties, for example...being born human is the throwing karma, right? but completion would be complete faculties or incomplete faculties or whatever...?

Ven.: well, the other way to say it is what I said before... There's four different ways your karma ripens. The one that ripens at the time of your death, which is the 'throwing' karma, which for that person with the missing faculties, that's the morality would have ripened that caused their consciousness to go on autopilot to find a nice American mummy's womb. Then the second way their karma ripened is the 'tendencies'. They lacked a few tendencies -- they lacked a bit of intelligence, they lacked the ability to have control over their mind; so that's the second way, the second kind of karma, which is simply called 'actions similar to the cause'. The different tendencies in there, you know? That's those ones, you know; so they'd be lacking some of those. But they've got this one -- I mean, if they were living on the street in India like that, with no one to help them, then they also lack the 'experience similar to the cause', of being taken care of and loved, don't they? But if you're born that way into a nice home and people take care of you and love you, well then, you've got good 'experiences similar to the cause', so all the stuff that happens *to* you is 'experiences', all the stuff that's *in* you -- they're the right words for it, but I prefer to talk about it this way -- They're your 'tendencies'; so, whatever bunch of tendencies you get born with.

So what they mean by 'perfect human rebirth' -- a phrase they use in Tibetan -- you've got not only decent intelligence and discrimination and morality and goodness and all those things but you've also got the wish to grow all that. Lots of people are really good people, but they don't have any wish to continue it; they kind of use up all the merit and they end up finishing it all, they don't grow more seeds. So the 'perfect human rebirth' one is having all that *and* wanting to continue to work with it and grow more of it. That's the spiritual practice, isn't it? That's the one...

Q: Are you also maybe confusing bodhicitta, throwing bodhicitta versus actual bodhicitta...

Ven.: What, darling?

Q: Well, with bodhicitta we talk about aspiring bodhicitta and actual bodhicitta which is not...

Ven.: Well, no, I wasn't referring to that so much here...

Q: No, I thought maybe Bob was...

Q: No...

Ven.: No, I think he wasn't ... I think he was talking about something different... So was that clear? Was that what you wanted me to say?

Q: Yeah... I just didn't make the connection with the...vocabulary...

Ven.: The words I was using? No, I see...that's the typical *lam rim* way...I know I've changed it to my own way of saying it so often I forget what Lama Tsong

Khapa says. I'm sorry! Oh okay...what else, folks? Yes, sweetheart? What's your name?

Where are the Helpers? The Role of our Spiritual Friends...

44:57 Q: Nanda.

Ven.: Nanda. Where'd you get that from?

Q: ...my father...it's a completely made up...

Ven.: Oh, Okay! Speak to me...

Q: So, this process that you're describing -- is it, is it necessarily internal and individual?

Ven.: As opposed to...?

Q: ...and lonely?

Ven.: As opposed to...?

Q: As opposed to...so, being your own therapist, looking and seeing and doing all of that...Where are the helpers?

Ven.: Okay...let's pretend we're talking about learning music. It's exactly the same. If you don't engage in that music -- you can have 42 schoolmates all practicing music, you can have the best teachers on earth, you can have Steinway pianos coming out of your ear...honey, if you don't commit, 'I will do it. I can do it.' And you sit at that piano on your own, practicing regardless, you will not become a piano player. It's the same thing. So in that sense it's lonely. In that sense it has to be you, it's isolated, it's you that has to do it. But honey, if you're surrounded by other music players, you know, practitioners, who are all trying to do the same thing, then, of course, they give you great courage. We need that. But often the point is people say, 'Oh, I can't practice dharma on my own. I need to go to a center.' And that's fine -- but unless we've got -- the inner determination to do it is the key. If we use our friends to help us get the inner determination, then it's really worthwhile. But if it's just sort of thinking 'by going to a dharma center, I'm practicing' and you really never do it at home...you understand.

So it's the same as learning anything. You've got to have that determination, 'Even if no one else does it, I'm going to be like Mozart. Practice six hours a day...' And we can see he was highly motivated, and most of us *aren't* like that. Which is why we do need support -- that's the sangha. We need it. But, you know, having the sangha and not practicing, you might as well not bother having it. You've got to practice as well. It is lonely, in that sense, but not lonely.. .if you are encouraged by other people practicing...you understand what I'm saying, you get my point... You've got to be determined to do it. And that's where you can use your fellow friends, because you're encouraged. And that's the benefit of a teacher. If you see His Holiness every day, and you think, 'Oh,

isn't he amazing...that's the Dalai Lama, oh, I can't be like him...' then you're wasting his time. He's only existing to show us how to be. So we use him in a good way, 'Wow, I can be like that!' You understand. Then it's worthwhile. And because we're ordinary people, we do need this. But finally it comes down to your own determination, because that's what -- you'll never make changes until you do it. Isn't it? Yeah... Someone else...something else?

We can talk about how to purify, then we can go in more detail on... well, it's 4:30 already, have we had enough? Something else, what, darling?

Renunciation

48:18 Q: I struggle with, I get it that renunciation is the *ticket* for me, like, I need that. And without that sense, that clear sense, but at the same time I remember that the analogy that makes the most sense for how my mind works is the lepers... and the lepers, they sit there cauterizing their skin because it feels so good... and that's the only pleasure they know, like this is the pleasure I know, all of these little things I do to get me through, you know, my day, that I call pleasures, my attachments, my anger, my aversion, all of that -- it's like me cauterizing the wound.. and then the Buddha walks by and says, 'Hey! It gets better if you can just stop doing that...'

Ven.: So, your conclusion here...?

Q: But, it's like, dude, there's no security... I've been sitting here for a long time...

Ven.: Okay. Okay. So, let's now add in something here. So, you've got the stages of practice. The very first level is you control your body and speech. That already is amazing. Then we've got high school where you begin to work on your mind, and that's where you get renunciation. That's where, as Lama Zopa says, 'You have got renunciation when just the thought of another moment of attachment -- just the thought of another moment of attachment -- is so disgusting, it's like being in as septic tank.'

Now, if we hear that, and then we look at our likes, we can see there's a big disconnect between us and renunciation. But don't get depressed, sweetheart. It's all right. Because you can only be where you're at. You can only be in grade one. And if you're in grade one, and you're faking it until you make it and you're doing your best, and you're aiming for this, how else can you get to grade two if you don't keep doing grade one, and know that you'll eventually get to grade two? When you see grade two or grade seven, you just get depressed. When you hear -- this is like grade seven, you know? And you're, 'Aw, I'm not in grade seven, I might as well kill myself.' No. What do you do? You energize by that. You think, 'I want to be this way.' You aim towards it. You fake it 'til you make it and you keep being in grade one and slowly you'll be in grade two and before you know it, you'll look back and go, 'Wow... I've made some progress here.' Instead of just becoming depressed about it -- I'm not saying you are -- but you get my point? You've got to be really courageous. We can only be where we're at. That's why you got to know where you're heading, you got to know where you

come from, and you got to know where you *are*. We often just keep thinking every day, 'I'm just a bad person.' You've gone four miles but you keep thinking you're still in the same place. You're not in the same place. You have made progress, so you've got to look back and see how far you've come. We forget to do that. It's contextual. It's really important. That's one point.

The other one is -- and this is Lama Zopa Rinpoche, he's so kind -- he helps us, he realizes we're all a bunch of peanuts, and we're not going to get renunciation any time soon, because we are so addicted to our ordinary life, okay? He can see this. So, what he does is he gives us all these amazing skillful techniques from the Mahayana, which is 'university', that you can bring in and add on top of all the rubbish.

So for example, at this level of practice, the renunciation level, in order to give up attachment, you've got to really see the food as shit. You've got to not engage -- that's why you've got to be a nun and go to the mountains, that's the best way to get renunciation. That's according to this level of practice. There's no shortcut, okay? So that what he does is -- see, he knows that 99.9999% of us won't be practicing that level, including nuns, believe me -- he says, well, why not create some virtue by adding the Mahayana to it and by beginning to think differently. Normally speaking, to get renunciation, in relation to food, you'd just eat it slowly, you'd think it's disgusting, you'd try not to rise your attachment. That's the right approach. Are you hearing me? Now, that's too much for us, we can't cope with that. So, what he says is: before you shove it in your mouth, honey, you create immense virtuous karmic imprints by seeing it as empty, by imagining it as oceans of nectar, by blessing it with the energy of all the holy beings, by visualizing and daydreaming about offering it to all the Buddhas and all the bodhisattvas and all the sentient beings and by seeing them all as having the pleasure of having it...you can't even conceive of the virtuous seed you put in your mind by thinking those positive thoughts, which, then when you *do* shove the food in like a vampire as usual, you just spent one minute creating phenomenally virtuous seeds. You get my point. So, it kind of helps *redeem* the attachment a little bit. So it's a different approach. So, Rinpoche spends all his time giving us these methods of how to transform ordinary life. So at least, when we eat and do the rest of the things we do, use these, so we purify our mind in another way...are you seeing my point? Do you hear my point?

Because every thought you have is a karma. Lama Zopa says even having one kind thought on this earth is so outrageous because of the intensity of the suffering of this world. So just to consciously have positive thoughts -- big ones -- every one of those is a karmic seed you plant. But because we're so used to thinking, 'Oh, thoughts are nothing, you know...'...but for three seconds, having positive thoughts, you should be weeping in tears at the amount of virtuous karma you've just created.

So, there's different approaches to practice, so use these techniques as much as possible. You hear my point? Then have a happy mind about it. You can have your cake and eat it, too. We sort of cheat -- we're fundamentalist, we think we're supposed to suffer, you know? Are you hearing me? So you just have to

remember, darling, that's all. Because you're purifying your mind, every time you have a virtuous thought, you're purifying your mind. Every time you don't have attachment, you're purifying your mind. But these are more potent and powerful thoughts to have, because you're not merely not trying to have attachment to the cake, but here you're actively doing something hugely virtuous. It's marvelous! It's so sensible. As Rinpoche says, 'Once you've done that, the bigger your stomach, the better! Shove it in!' Honest! We don't want to believe it because we think we have to suffer, you know... we think we have to be miserable and long-faced...are you hearing me? Good.

So even as you're doing it, you're having water -- you're thinking of it as empty, imagining it as blissful nectar, and all the beings in the universe experience it as you drink it in... right then your mind is changing...you're completely transforming your view of this (glass of water). Right there! So what you're doing as a Buddhist is changing the way you think about everything. That's all you're doing! You hearing me? Good. I think it's good to end on that.

So, these four hours, gone like a dream -- three hours, only three, really, isn't it? But you get double the money with me 'cause I talk fast... I always tell this -- I remember my friend in the Brisbane Center in Queensland in Australia, she invited three of us nuns to come and give an hour-and-a-half talk on Tuesday nights. Three Tuesdays in a row. And she transcribed the teachings. And the other two nuns, theirs were eight pages and mine were twenty-four! So, three times the pace! So you got your money's worth... (General laughter...)

Okay, so we have a happy mind, we're delighted, we're listening to all this stuff - - me too, believe me -- processing it, analyzing it, thinking about it, a few pennies going, you know, a few pennies dropping, perhaps, hopefully... And then we think, 'How marvelous!' We have just done this three hours of incredible practice. May all these seeds that we have planted, may we nourish them from this moment forward with our virtue and our effort so that they *do* ripen in the development of my incredible potential, so I really can be of benefit to all sentient beings without exception.

Jang chhub sem chog rin po chhe ma kye pa nam kye gyur chig kye pa nyam pa me pa yang gong na gong du phel war shog

And pray that Lama Zopa Rinpoche has a long life, Rinpoche as you know is having -- did have -- a stroke, getting better slowly in Kathmandu. He's at Kopan Monastery, getting taken care of... his speech isn't good, his right leg and right arm... So we dedicate for Lama Zopa Rinpoche, boss of the center, and we visualize him... the Lamas say, don't visualize him as sick, visualize him all fat and shiny and healthy, you know. And that he live long and teach us perfect Dharma... that we create the cause to receive the Dharma from Rinpoche by doing his wishes.

All right! Thanks, everybody, very much! Happy to be back in Missoula...

So, what we're going to go into nicely tomorrow, we're going to talk about dependent arising, and how that helps us understand emptiness, which is the real wisdom teachings of Lord Buddha, and how karma actually is a really perfect example of dependent arising. How this is an excellent way to loosen the grip of ego, you know. Well talk more about that tomorrow, we'll just naturally go into that tomorrow. That'll be at the Center, won't it? Okay...Bye, bye!

Transcribed by Fran McDermott