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developing ability to use the many tools we already have, goal of spontaneous loving kindness, protecting our view of bodhicitta, developing skill to just sit by river of our experience, the value of doing some experimenting with our teachings

LMC [00:01:28] So first, how did this morning go? [student makes a thumbs up gesture] Could you say more than that?

Student 1 [00:01:38] That's all Facebook has. [laughter] Being aware of experiences, has been really enlightening [laughs] very helpful to keep me present. Though you've been kind of doing that the last two or three weeks. And it's been helpful for me.

Student 2 [00:02:18] You asked us to do some contemplation on the refuge recitation. And so I listened in a different way to the first line, where I and all beings go for refuge. And that suddenly struck me that all beings really meant all beings.

LMC [00:02:41] As opposed to just your friends?

Student 2 [00:02:44] Not people who are just Dharma oriented. So I started thinking about certain public figures who I consider highly confused. [laughter] Also, their life was... going for the same things that my life is going for. Though it's hard for me to tell that. But just knowing that... that that's true... has a lot of impact. Just in the way... I think it invokes more compassion. It just allows me to soften my view. Not my opinions, but, my view. So that was really meaningful.

LMC [00:03:35] So what do you get for that?

Student 2 [00:03:39] Maybe a little more ease. I mean, that might not sound like very much, but it really did. It gave me a sense of some peacefulness and ease. Like I... could soften around maybe some... well certainly, I don't know if I want to say around opinions yet... because I might not. But just holding... I'm thinking of a few specific individuals in a different way. Just trying to see how their actions... no matter how I think of them, they're still in that same pursuit. Even if there's... like there doesn't even have to be like, I wouldn't expect them to say, 'oh, yes, I'm going to the true sources of refuge. [laughter] I don't think that's in their vocabulary. But just even without that, still... I don't know. I think it's still true. It's just true. I'm stumbling around here.

LMC [00:05:09] Well, the reason that I asked you, 'what do you get for it?' is because I think that any of these practices, properly done, skillfully done, is beneficial in both directions. So we don't change our approach or our attitude without something happening to *us*. Right. It's just a given. Even we don't know what it is, we know that something happens. Then something also happens, it happens to us in kind of a reflexive way. It also happens outside. In the same way that we do anything outside, something *happens*. So, from that perspective, it's actually not a big leap to get to the place where... any of the practices can shed light on all of the practices.

[00:06:12] So the thing about that, which is I think helpful, is... if we're not living in an environment like a cloistered retreat, for example, where the instructions are given to us and we're expected to do exactly that. Most of us are living in a place where we're making those choices. I'm going to practice this. Or I'm going to go to Jeff and Sally's thing and try that or

whatever it is. And it's helpful, I think, to realize that whatever it is that you're pursuing, pursued properly, authentically... it contains the entire path. So that we have an ever-expanding view of it. Rather than kind of shrinking view. Where it comes down to the question, which is kind of ridiculous, what do I get from it? But some people will say, I've been working on behalf of sentient beings for decades and I'm still waiting for mine. So, actually, people do say that. It's not an illegitimate question. But it does indicate there's a piece of the view that's missing there. At some point that can be added on to.

Student 2 [00:07:34] The other part of it was, since I don't anticipate being enlightened in this life time, that at least I have a sense that something is being accomplished. Even if I'm still the most distracted being, or at least one of the most...

LMC [00:08:05] It's quite a boast. [laughter]

Student 3 [00:08:27] On the same line... maybe not as good... [laughs] when I was contemplating certain individuals... often the best I can do is just see how much resistance I have. You know, so... I don't know if I should be okay with that or not. No one is seeing how much resistance I have. One bit of advice I got from somebody which made sense, they said, "Well, maybe you can't take and send like love and whatever, but maybe you can say, I wish for you to be without malice. I wish for you to be without, you know, hate or whatever. Try that." And when I'm really trying to get somewhere good, I'll just think, once they were a baby.

LMC [00:09:24] You might object to the past tense but... [laughter].

Student 3 [00:09:37] What do you do with that? I'm trying to decide. I mean, it made me wonder... about it. My feeling of resistance to thinking good thoughts about someone in a certain kind of nuts-and-bolts kind of way. Like trying not to say, Mr. Stupid.

LMC [00:10:22] I think you can ask... we can always ask the question, what's the likely outcome of anything that I might think or say or do? And is that really the direction that I want to go? And what could I do that's different? We have a lot of tools as practitioners. We have a lot of tools. And mostly as we get those tools, we don't keep up with our ability to use them. They tend to come faster than our ability to use them well. So in one way, one could make a case, easily, that... if not enough things come at you, you never will learn to use them. If you don't encounter enough difficult situations, you just never learn to use them. Some may never learn to use them anyway. But for sure, if you're not challenged, you don't... it's like everything.

[00:11:26] And our goal, which I think in even the very difficult circumstances, our goal is that we could honestly, easily, spontaneously generate loving kindness and caring about all sentient beings. And it's very different when these things are theoretical. Like you read the history book and you read about Mussolini and Hitler and Stalin. And it's actually kind of easy... to have a sense that they also have buddhanature. And they're also confused and all. Because they don't appear to be affecting our lives in that moment. When someone affects our lives, we are put into a different situation. Even when they don't know they are... or they do, doesn't really matter.

[00:12:28] But we have to protect ourselves in this, too. I think sometimes we miss that and we have to protect ourselves if we are to actually hold the view, the aspiration to benefit all beings. And protecting that is not necessarily easy. We might say, well, what would not be a protection for it? And what would be? Well, killing people who are after us probably wouldn't help us protect that aspiration. Doing things that hurt other people would not help to maintain that

aspiration. So just because a couple of people mentioned to me the question of, 'when do I get mine?'... I mean, it was kind of tongue-in-cheek, but at the same time, it was like, 'don't you ever get *anything* back?' It was like that. My first reaction to that was, *really!?!* You don't see what you get? But then it was clear it wasn't a joke. It was like, no, really, they're not seeing what they get. So if you *always* feel like you're shelling it out... and there's no benefit for you out of that, this is a problem.

[00:13:54] On the other hand, kind of the '*rules of engagement*' within the Dharma, [laughs] include... you can't take it away from somebody else because you feel like you don't have enough. That kind of undermines what you did have and now it's worse. I think that's a piece of the puzzle that we often don't talk too much about. Like how do I protect... my view? I value the view of bodhicitta... of benefiting all sentient beings without exception, with complete 100% equanimity. I *value* these things. How do I maintain that value and protect them without also just falling into a dark trap, feeling like... I'm a martyr and a bad one. I'm a loser martyr. [laughter] I don't even like it!

[00:14:52] It's just an interesting puzzle. And that puzzle should be resolved. I think there's no shame in working on that puzzle. Like I feel like I'm always coming up with a short stick! I would like to get the long stick once, you know. It's a worthy conversation, worthy investigation for anyone who feels that way. I don't personally feel that way. But I can relate to people who feel that way. Like, wait a minute, we're in a spiritual tradition that requires us to give everything and get nothing? ... You got to be able to answer that. If to no one else, yourself.

Student 3 [00:15:46] And you're saying protecting those aspirations by... I think what you said was, by the things we do and say. Is that what you said?

LMC [00:15:57] Well, that's how we would protect it, but also what we think. And there is a key. Well, for example, we have all our friends around us. And they have found themselves in a difficult situation of some kind. And we would like to help them. And we give rise to that aspiration mentally, verbally, to ourselves. And we feel *good* when we give rise to that aspiration. I may not be able to be successful, but I feel joyful at my ability to generate the aspiration... *at least*. And then you find out that there's some really bad people in that group. And suddenly we find ourselves cherry picking the ones we want to benefit. I'll benefit these people *first*. Then they'll carry the tradition on somehow. In all the different ways that that can happen.

[00:16:59] So the question... 'what do I get from this?' is a simple question. It doesn't have to be complicated with all the things of... I should be this and I shouldn't be that. It's just a very simple question. When do I get mine? For me... it's already done! I always feel like... giving rise to the aspiration to benefit others, even though... it *fails* more than not. Just in a kind of obvious way, it still feels like it was the right aspiration to hold. It's easy also to see how somebody would *not* feel that way. I held the aspiration and I got beat up anyway. I got mugged. Somebody broke my windshield or whatever it is... it doesn't work, therefore. I think that's pretty common. Pretty easy to relate to in one way. So the issue of how do you protect it... is not outside the realm of the Dharma. Even though we're saying how do I... protect *my* aspiration? You can find teachings in books and things on how you protect your bodhicitta... for example. So I wouldn't throw that away. It's good.

Student 3 [00:18:41] Okay. All right. Thank you,

Student 4 [00:18:47] Two things. The first, briefly, you used the analogy of the river and there's everything floating by. I always thought that was such a great analogy. But then when you said today, 'river of our experience'... I saw... you know how you hear something a hundred times and the hundred and first time.... Oh!! Like that.

LMC [00:19:17] Saw your eyes get big...[laughter]

Student 4 [00:19:19] And it was kind of like... it was, yeah! It is. And then it gets dammed up. I get off on something and... it's a 'damn' situation. [laughter] And so that was very helpful. I wanted to thank you. Sometimes, some understanding, you know, some inner understanding opens up for a minute, you know, when you get a deeper view of something. And I guess the question I have is... the person in question that we're talking about, the President, in watching this person and how he constructs his world and has to keep it... he has to stay on top of his world and have a particular viewpoint about himself. And so there's a lot of energy that goes into that defense. And all the stuff that we all do. And I have been examining lately, you know, my own ways of buffering myself from aspects that I might not want to see or I'm embarrassed about. And also, how it's like a doll, one of those plastic dolls with a -round bottom. You hit it and it keeps coming. And that's what it's like. You know, I'll find a way to keep myself upright, to myself, in whatever possible way I can. And I don't see that most of the time. It's so ingrained. It's under the radar. It's so ingrained and it's so pervasive that... I'm just hoping that, you know, in watching this river, I could catch more glimpses of that device. All the different devices that I have... to keep on top of the game, whatever that is at the moment. In that moment... and

LMC [00:21:56] And what is on top of the game mean?

Student 4 [00:21:59] Well, what's the word? I'm sort of like... the way I want people to see me. The way I like to see myself. The way I get my feedback from the world, that sort of thing. And it's all posturing in some ways, to keep myself feeling that I am *somebody*, basically. In this way or that way or that way or this way, you know, and I'm usually buffered by it by excuses and...

LMC [00:22:36] Buffered or buffeted?

Student 4 [00:22:38] Well, buffeted is one. And buffered is that I don't see it. like bumper cars. So I'm wondering if you could have anything to say about that and hopefully, we practice the way to open up... to see... what one is doing on that lower radar mumbling level.

LMC [00:23:10] I think you made a wrong turn.

Student 4 [00:23:15] Did I? How's that?

LMC [00:23:22] Insofar as the practice that we were talking about this morning. The practice of just looking at the stream of your experiences... you *will* see things like... wanting to be somebody, by my own standard. Right. But the moment that you see that, it is something to see. But nothing to do anything about. So you may see, for example, I want to be somebody. Actually, that's not what I *should* be doing, wanting to be somebody. So that comes from the reaction to seeing the wanting to be and all. But that's not the practice. Some practices, it's important to see the mistakes. Like I want to be somebody. This practice, that's not a piece of it. You will see all the things you don't want to see. But the skill to develop is... you're just sitting by the river. Would you look at the river and say, you know, river, you're going north, but really you

should go south, you know? [laughter] And as for those branches that are in there, you should get rid of those too. It's just ridiculous, of course.

[00:24:51] But it's no *less* ridiculous when we see our own proclivities, which we recognize as *not* in accordance with the Dharma. Or not in accordance with what we imagine realization is. It's no more ridiculous to criticize ourselves for having had the thought... I would like to be *great* at doing this. And of course, by extension, I would like others to see it. Not too much, but just enough, so I know. [laughter]

[00:25:27] Then we say, oops, there's that 'I' thing again. And then we start in on how do I get rid of the 'I'? You don't get rid of the 'I'. But the 'I' is so pervasive that that's why it's said, sometimes you cannot attain buddhahood in this body. Now there's also the teaching, you *can* obtain buddhahood, except they never say it that way. They always say, in this life. Because enlightenment doesn't occur *in* the body.

[00:26:04] So we need to develop the skill of... whatever floats down the river... that's cool. It floats down river. In the same way... the reason the river analogy is so good... and the reason why you see so many times... like a painting, ancient stuff... we have a painting, and the sage is by the river watching the river go by. I remember, for so many years I thought, what is this thing? It's like it occurs in so many places, like what's going on? And then I had a lot of ideas. I think at this point, none of them count. The thing that is inspiring is... sitting by the river watching the river go by... done. That's it. And the *river* is the river of your experience. I love myself. I hate myself. I wish I could fix this person. No, I really shouldn't fix that person. I should be working on this. And all the things that we do, which are just... experiences. We can judge them and say, oh, I shouldn't do it. That's another experience.

[00:27:11] So, if we can start to develop the ability to just rest our awareness, as bumpy and uneven as it might be, to just see the experience go by. There's no break in it. It never ends. Day and night. It never ends. And then there's the teaching of... even you kill yourself, it doesn't end. So it's obviously... the wrong move to try and fix it. It isn't going to fix. It's fine just the way it *is*. The issue is, can I just be okay with everything that I see and see everything? Just to see?

[00:28:01] So that's what I meant by a wrong move. It's like, nothing to fix. The fix is only like, can I become so skillful that in the middle of a conversation... pleasant, unpleasant, complicated, easy, whatever it is, attachment and aversion aside, all that stuff... can I just like, drop into the place of just witnessing the flow, that's all.

[00:28:31] That's the shamatha practice that we've been trying to work with gradually. And we'll continue to work with it gradually, but it's not the only thing. Because some people can't do that. Or they can't do it yet and so they feel like they're going to fail at it. So there's other things to look at than just the totality of the stream and the river of our experience, which can be too much. So we need another level to drop down into it, too. That's just an issue of having sufficient tools and skills to work with all situations that arise. ... Does that make sense?

Student 4 [00:29:23] Yeah, it does. You know, what happens is that I'm there for a few seconds, like I guess most people, and there's a clog. Something becomes, No, that's not... you know, some thing.

LMC [00:29:40] That has to go out of your vocabulary, "No, that's not my experience." [laughter]

Student 5 [00:30:04] Well, originally, I was just going to take on to... that, you know, the unsaid conversation about the person that we won't name [i.e. Trump, laughter] and just... that it wasn't part of the practice we did today. So, my thought was, well, that's the fuel for the practice and that's *why* I practice is because of the confusion. So there was that. But then in line with what we *were* practicing, what came to mind was mostly... the impermanence of everything that was going through me at the time because sitting on the river, nothing stopped. It was just a continuous stream of ...

LMC [00:30:59] Flotsam and jetsam.

Student 5 [00:30:59] All I could think of was impermanence.

LMC [00:31:02] I think that meditation is really nice. You recognize the impermanence. You don't lose that. Just stay with that. See it unfolding... continuously.

Student 5 [00:31:16] So even the distractions that arise that you see, you see your thoughts going in all kinds of directions, that's just all part of the river going downstream.

LMC [00:31:29] And we get totally distracted, of course. And we can't say, "That's not a distraction. It's just your experience." That's not helpful. But what is helpful is... I think... that we understand, just have a kind of a conceptual support here, we understand that the distraction is just a category that I put a piece of my experience into. It's not actually different than the other experiences. But I wasn't *present* for it. I left the room for a while, [laughs] and then this big log came down the river. But it's still the same. It's still your experience. And just having the conceptual thing to kind of, for a moment, chew on... the fact that I got very attached or had a big aversion to this particular experience, it doesn't change. It's better if we can see it in the moment that it occurs.

But second best is just to see like it's just another experience. It has no more value than the itch that I scratch. It's just that. And in the context of our meditation, I think that's totally appropriate. Now, some people will say, as what happened at Aurora the other night, there was one person who said, I feel like it's not enough. Like, in this world, at this time, to meditate on these things is *not* enough. And it's a great question, right?

Student 5 [00:33:30] Well, if you have control over everybody else, then it's not enough. But if you only have control over your own actions...

LMC [00:33:38] Yeah. If you have control everybody else, I think we call that fascism. [laughter] You know, it's not a goal.

Student 6 [00:33:52] I just wanted to share something. The first two sessions, I had the same experience of being totally distracted by everything that came up. I couldn't even manage to visualize or feel that I was sitting on the side of the river. Like I was in the river, like my old days. And then in the third session, I had this image, like spontaneously occur to me, of a white tiklé floating on a leaf in the river. And it had a luminous quality. So I didn't want it to fall into the water. [laughter] So it really grabbed my attention. And so, the river kept going. All these thoughts and experiences kept coming up. But I didn't want to focus on anything except this leaf with a tiklé floating down. Just feeling the precariousness of it and feeling that like possible impermanence of this light on the leaf. So just contemplating that makes me think that... I mean, I feel like it was a gift from my unconscious or something to help me like focus. But yet, I think

that is a kind of a shamatha, a sacred object to me. So it's like you ask... saying just to meditate on all these experiences that come up. It's like meditation *without* an object. Because there's no permanent objects anywhere. So I think I was like grasping somehow for an object to focus on. Something that felt luminous and sacred. So it *worked* after that. But maybe I'm just not ready to, like, focus without something like that.

LMC [00:35:58] I think I think you're totally ready. We already do it. Our experience, like, just flows continuously. We don't have to do anything. We can't stop it. We can't make it go. Everything we try is driven by, you know, for the most part, I think almost safe to say everything, not quite, but... mostly we're driven by our attachments and aversions. And the mixtures of, you know, our mental events of the past and where we want to go in the future. All these things. But the *core* of meditation is to transcend all that. But when we say transcend all that, I think... for thinking people, [laughs] there's a kind of place where we want to say, transcend all that into what? I mean, okay! I have a river of experience. I can see *that*. And I get distracted and I find my way back. All these things. I'm not so great at it. But my question is, if I was really great at it, so what?

[00:37:08] If I hold the view of the benefit of others, is that helpful? Or just neutral or what, exactly? I think you have to bring the answers to that. But of course, the conceptual responses to the flow of our own experience can only really be kind of helpful in the context of engaging in the meditation itself. Anything else is just ordinary, worldly stuff. We're all good at that... conceptual activity. So watching the river is definitely a skill in meditation. And you said, I think it's like shamatha with no object. You can also say it's shamatha with unlimited objects. How do you want to cut that?

Bill [00:38:08] Infinite.

LMC [00:38:10] Yeah. They're all linked together like an infinite train. They just flow forever. And... any of them distract us because they're so pleasant. And we have a sense of... maybe we had an insight. Maybe it's a genuine insight. Maybe it's not. And we can chew and analyze those things endlessly. We already know that. We're brilliant at it. [laughs] And I really mean unusually skilled at it, I think, as a culture, we tend to go there. Much of our training and school leads us in that direction. We're *fascinated* by it. Since we were never really taught to just watch the flow of our experience, doing it for a bit provides us with another thing to work with, with the tools that we've been working with all along. And part of what we want to do is... we don't need to throw those tools away, but we need to know the difference between using the tools we already know and the ones that we haven't yet mastered. And so I think putting the awareness on the on the flow of experience, it *can* be ecstatic. I mean, the experience itself can be ecstatic. There's nothing wrong with that. Until we decide... all my experiences have to be ecstatic. [laughter] And now we have to divide by the square root and a few other things to get it to come out right.

[00:39:45] So I think the track is right. But it really is... *ponderous* in terms of how long it will take us to get to the place where we can just be present. So you encounter somebody who offends you. And then to just be able to put your awareness on the *feeling* of that, without even labeling as 'offensive' or 'the other person'. I think when that happens and you can look and say like, well, this is an improvement. This is a good direction. And it's a good direction, *both* in a worldly sense... so when we talk about benefiting sentient beings, what an enormous benefit... to be able to rest with the flow of your experience and not have unbridled reactions to it. How good's that!

[00:40:45] So I think this is where we get the interdependence. Impermanence is the easy one, actually. Interdependence is more difficult. But it's really just a corollary of impermanence. The interdependence is we've got to see the *connections* between our experience and the things that we have thought and done and said and all the other things. And see them without generating endless judgments and opinions about ourselves and others and all. That also gets confusing. Someone will always say... and I will say, I'm kind of grateful for it at this point... someone will *always* say, I don't think that's enough. We have to go do something. And there isn't anything in the practice that says, "You shouldn't do anything." It would be silly to put it in there, "You shouldn't do anything" because we're going to do it anyway. So we may as well have a way to do it, which is helpful. So go do the thing you got to do. But while you're doing it, don't lose the thread of your experience. At least leave some breadcrumbs [laughs] so you can get out of the cave.

Bill [00:42:07] A little question there. When you talk about, you meet someone who offends you and you put your attention on *it*.

LMC [00:42:16] On the experience.

Student 7 [00:49:28] To add to that... Lama Michael, we've had teachings on the river experience before and teachings on focusing on the breath. But the way that you put the two together at the end of the first teaching, it helped me experience more of just aware of the river and not diving into it and thinking the thoughts and chewing on the stuff going by and being immersed in the river. And so, adding focusing on the breath as we're being aware of this river experience, helped me see it as the river and I was on the edge, instead of diving in. Putting those two together was very helpful and gave me... not continuous, but instances of just being aware... instead of thinking or doing. Yeah. So thanks for the junction. ... You're looking puzzled.

LMC [00:50:45] I usually am.

Student 7 [00:50:49] Because it sounded like at the end of the first teaching, the intro, you have been talking about the river and then you mention focusing on breath. And that kind of gave like an ... ah! ... This helped.

Student 8 [00:51:24] I just wanted to say something about how we envision people that we don't like and then realizing the other sides that they have. Seeing that. When I was about 15, I started to live with my stepfather and he was the perfect dad. I mean, he was kind. He tutored me in algebra every night. He participated with the family, took us swimming. He did all these things. He was a good man. And we did it on a shoestring because he was only a G5 at that time. And he was a calm person. If I did something stupid, he never said that I was stupid. He was just very kind. Even if I did really, really stupid things. He was this ideal person. And my little brother went out on his bicycle one day and his best friend was a little black boy down the street. And my stepfather told him he couldn't play with that little boy anymore. And then later on, probably about five years later, I was living with them up and in the north part of the state in New Mexico. I was going to the university and my best friend happened to be an African-American pianist. And she was visiting and I begged her to play something on the piano. She played this beautiful piece. And we left because I was going to give her a ride back to the university. And he looked at me as we were leaving. He said, don't invite her again. And so I came to realize, over many years, that he was a blatant racist. And as he grew into his alcoholism, it became very pronounced, bad jokes and so on. I just love that man. And as I grew older... one time, my husband and I came down to visit. And he was taking us all out to eat at a

very nice little restaurant. And my step father began to tell blatantly racist jokes, even using the N-word. And Dave was really kind. And he said, I would appreciate it if you would stop saying that. I would appreciate it if you would not do that anymore. Because, I mean, Dave was taking them out to eat. So... it's difficult living with someone that you really love and then you realize there's a part of them that's just really weird. And so I can imagine with the Trump children that this must be a real strange situation that they're into. But I just want to bring it up because... and then the other thing I want to say is that about 30 or 40 years ago, Svetlana Stalin put out the book about her father and how she loved him. I mean, this is a strange situation! It just seems to be what things are all about.

Student 6 [00:55:09] It's just kind of like we're all those same people, right? I mean, we get this kind, loving side, then we can actually manifest that other side if we let it.

LMC [00:55:28] I think that this last exchange is actually... is really *key*, in a way. When we talk about ...there's an experimental part of what we all engage in when we practice the Dharma. And there is another piece which is clearly prescribed by the formal teachings in the Dharma and whatever lineage you're part of, and all. And I think both of those things are important. That is to say that... I can't really imagine that you would go *deep* into an understanding of the Dharma if you didn't carry your own experiment into that space. I cannot imagine it. You would be able to say the right things, look the right way, all of those things... but would you actually have the depth of experience and ability to be skillful and wise in decisions and relationships? Probably not. Probably not. But I also think there's a risk on the other side, where it *all* becomes an experiment. And then it takes on shades from other aspects of our life, which we've always wanted to be... spiritual. All those other things. And now we're actually sort of bringing them into the Hall of Fame. When they may or may not be worthy of that.

[00:57:00] For example, just in the very beginning of our practice, when we look at the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer and something like the Four Immeasurables of loving kindness and compassion and sympathetic joy and equanimity... we need to also spend at least equal time in those places... in order that we don't lose that tried-and-true thread of authenticity. That when we step into the experimental edge, I think sometimes we're stepping just outside... of those formal teachings, which is good. I wouldn't say never do that, because I couldn't possibly hold that standard myself. I think that those formal teachings can be looked at and we can look at our own experiment through those formal teachings and find the way in which the experiment that we run, which is based upon our own proclivities and our own history and all these things, we can see that it is authentic and or maybe it isn't... based upon our understanding of the formal teachings. I'm not saying that's exactly the way I wanted to, but I think that sometimes we see situations where the Dharma is... commandeered as a spiritual support for other disciplines. Which are not necessarily contradictory. But we can supplant the authenticity of the foundation teachings, in ways which are not helpful.

[00:58:50] So, for example, when we practice the Four Immeasurables, I think it's important to practice that Four Immeasurables as they're prescribed. Not in the way that we dream up, all of these things. And that doesn't contradict running experiments in our own minds. But what's important is to be clear about when we're running the experiment and when we're engaging in the formal practice. So we don't confuse those two things.

sangha [01:04:19] *dedicating the merit*