

## 2017\_04\_30\_pm2\_QA\_LMC.mp4

*benefits of meditating with group or alone, reasons regarding early rise, discriminating mind and 6 paramitas*

**LMC** [00:01:04] So I think you're all familiar with what we do this evening to open a conversation regarding subjects of interest to you in your meditation practice or your understanding of the Dharma in general. That means the ball's in your court. Since we all grew up playing tennis.

[omitted the responses]

**Dora** [00:11:58] What's the different value between sitting in a group and practicing on your own?

**LMC** [00:12:23] Well, practicing in a group supports the sangha in general of course. So it's often nice in the sense of... many Dharma centers, if you live in the Dharma Center, then there's a requirement to go to meditation sessions. And of course, the sessions are always more than what you want to go to, but you go to them anyway. And then there's some value to that because you end up doing things, doing more meditation than you otherwise would. And you recognize *that* benefit. But inherently, I think aside from the value of kind of this cementing, the bonding, in the group... as a group of Dharma brothers and sisters doing their practice together, beyond that, and I'm not really sure what it is. So the benefit of supporting people in their practice by bringing them all together seems important.

[00:13:36] Whether you do it in the morning or you do it... or whenever you do, it's like there's something. We have a community because we have a time and we all come. And the same people don't always come to every session and all. But when you look at the total number of people, there's a lot of people go through here on a weekend. And I actually can't remember a time when somebody didn't say, "It's really nice to come and practice with so many people. I see people. Then I know people that I didn't know before." And so many benefits from that. But there isn't anything that can't be... subdued by other forces, you know. So, even we can avoid personal meditation by going to the group meditations. But there's something there that you missed by not doing your own personal meditation. If you only do the personal meditation, for any given person at any given time, that could become a way to avoid meditating with other people. So it's hard to balance all those things and say that there's some benefit to one thing that's not there for the other. I don't know.

**Dora** [00:15:11] It's an interesting... I mean, the fact is the tradition in the three-year retreat is to have all your practice sitting on your own in your room, except for those couple of hours of the morning, a little bit less... you know, what are the group times?

**LMC** [00:15:37] The group practices are a couple of times a day and, you know, an hour and a half to two hours each.

**Dora** [00:15:46] That kind of says what the...

**LMC** [00:15:54] I'm not sure what you're about to say is correct. [laughter]

**Dora** [00:15:57] I mean, I think it's a reflection of some kind of valuing by the lineage. That's my impression. That says you ought to... there's a need to do these group things and there's a need to do the bulk of it on your own.

**LMC** [00:16:19] I think a case could be made for that. I'm not sure that I would say that because we have also an enormous traditional value placed upon someone who does a lot of practice by themselves. You know, like Milarepa. And you can name another dozen famous people who have done that. I think the three-year retreat is in a certain way, not a good example. Because it's really designed *for* the three-year retreat.

[00:16:54] So it doesn't... I've never heard this, so maybe it's one way or the other, but what I do think is true is that... we're going to end up doing the same thing we did before, in the *sense* that we will all evaluate how things are going and whether or not that works. Just like we did when we said, should we have a second session in the day? That was not an easy decision. Because it disrupted lives and schedules and all sorts of things. And some people said, oh, we should do it in the morning, in the evening and so on. And then once you do it, it's difficult to *change* it. Because one of the values of, for example, doing the all-day sit once a month was... we didn't have to advertise it anymore. We're going to have an all-day sit, you know. And then everybody's getting geared up. Well, people can't get geared up every week. So you say every week. 'we're going to do it'. And then what happens is many more people come to that all day sit than they otherwise would because they just know it's scheduled.

[00:18:14] And I think that in a... just in order to make the case, not because it's true, that there's a certain way that things are likely to just naturally evolve once we move to the other location [the new building]. And that's the point at which we have to be careful, like from now until then. Because we're going to end up making decisions that we don't want to be a precedent *yet*, but they will become precedent, yet. [laughs] And that's just what it is. So that's why I think it's a really good idea, like Dora said, this is a good place to take a poll. Probably every time we meet is a good place to take a poll. And then making something even more detailed about it, to try and catch everybody's input on it. And then, of course, we'll end up moving. And then we'll find out whether or not that was the truth. [laughter] Or whether it was something else. It's the nature of the transition, I think. If it was next door, it would be an issue. The fact that it's a little ways away and you can't walk to it, and it's still a ten-minute drive, is that about right? Once you know exactly where.

**Student 1** [00:24:52] So what's the benefit of practicing early? And not like, right when you get up? Because I understand that... kind of dream state to meditation state, but the actual act of so early. People get up at four, six, six a.m. meditation. That seems insane to me. [laughter]

**LMC** [00:25:16] Why did you eliminate the early sleep states? What was that caveat about?

**Student 1** [00:25:26] Well, I understand like the difference between when you wake up, whatever time of day that it is, that state between you know, you're just sort of kind of groggy...

**LMC** [00:25:38] Waking and sleeping

**Student 1** [00:25:40] Waking to getting to, you know, from the sleep state to meditation. I get the benefit of that. But that's a little different of a question then. The benefit of getting up early, driving somewhere and practicing. So what's the benefit of that?

**LMC** [00:26:05] What's the benefit of which now?

**Student 1** [00:26:07] Just getting up early

**LMC** [00:26:08] Oh, just getting up early? Yeah, from a meditation standpoint, right?

**Student 1** [00:26:12] Like practicing with people or without?

**LMC** [00:26:16] Well, I think actually, I mean I can slightly tongue in cheek say, well, because it's an old Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Everybody gets up early to do it. That's how, you know, you're a Buddhist. [laughter] But actually, I think there's a lot more around the issue of waking up... in a in a certain way. In a way which easily transitions to a meditation state. But of course, it's totally true. You can wake up at noon and do that. You can wake up seven in the morning, do it. However, there's other things that are natural environmental supports for that process, like the sun rising and set. And the truth is, we can't always harness that support because we don't move around on the basis of when the sun rises and sets. We move around on the basis of how fast the hand turns on the clock and so on. And so, on any given morning, it may be like noon outside at six o'clock in the morning. So that rationale only partially works.

[00:27:45] But it's still the case that... and occasionally we do teach that process of like how to wake up with that, and things you can do to encourage it. And it is... in my own experience, it's a very powerful adjunct to meditation, to use the falling asleep and waking states as *points* in the day and night. But that's not fixed by the clock. If it's fixed by the clock, then we're in trouble for the reasons we just stated. It's helpful if you do that during sunrise and sunset. Not because there's necessarily something magic about sunrise and sunset. But when that *was* the clock... [laughs] that worked pretty good. It just isn't our clock now. So we could do it at any time. I don't have a particular preference with it. But do you want more on that?

**Student 1** [00:28:49] I always wonder if it's kind of going to shift with generations, or... ? I just know a lot of people who are not morning people. And it's actually hard, it would be really hard for me to get here at nine thirty in the morning. It would be impossible for me to get here at 6am. I mean I could probably pull it off a couple of times a year. If I was on retreat. That would be different.

**LMC** [00:29:19] Yeah, on retreat is different. Of course, the *point* of retreat is to set a schedule and have it. That one would follow after the retreat. But I get it. [laughs]

**Bill** [00:29:32] One of the most common things that's said about meditating in the morning is that we have a day that unfolds after that. So if we just do some practice before we get too far launched in our habits, then we have something that might actually have a little residual value as the day unfolds. That's the intention.

**Student 1** [00:30:00] But if you wake up at noon and you practice and then you start your day.

**LMC** [00:30:03] Yeah. Theoretically, it could happen at any time. In practice, of course, when we have a schedule, like Bill and I and anybody else who is teaching, then we have to be here at a certain time. And there's a fair number of times we might decide, like... I think I'll sleep in. But you can't do it. So you get up. So we lose that, the later in the day that we start. An added encouragement for doing the meditation before one o'clock rolls around. But that's only like an added support. The support is meant to help us sit down and do our meditation. And I think it

works and doesn't work. Depending on who you are and what your schedule is. So I think there's an argument to be made for 10 o'clock. I don't know if... at least there's an argument to be made for it.

**Student 2** [00:32:53] I've been reading a lot of the Lankavatara Sutra. I've been totally switching gears. But I was thinking a lot, because the Buddha talks a lot about the discriminating mind in it. And like in different lineages or all of the lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, you're trying to somewhat get to a place where everything is of one taste. And I kind of see that it's like a similarity in terms. Like the Lankavatara Sutra saying, everything is one taste.

**LMC** [00:33:39] So it's similar to what?

**Student 2** [00:33:42] In the Lankavatara Sutra, the Buddha talks a lot about discriminating mind. And about how it is essentially, and I mean, in so many words, the unwise mind or the ignorant mind. And not enlightened mind. And so I'm basically wondering what are good practices, or what are good ways, to try to get closer to that place, to one taste?

**LMC** [00:34:18] One taste! First you need to do the discriminating mind. I mean, the discrimination... that we're talking about is the ability to make decisions, choices, if you will, between what is helpful for you and others and what is not helpful. So... the 'one taste' is quite a ways past that. The learning to discriminate between our desires and our aversions and all of these things in a way that leads us to make decisions that we're happy about, that aren't filled with regret and that we feel comfortable with and we feel we benefit from. If you don't *feel* like you benefit from something, you don't want to repeat it... just naturally. So learning to discriminate can be done by following the, for example, the six paramitas. Like you take those as a practice for... some years. And do those like really carefully, then you discover something about what it's like to just discriminate. And at a certain point, then the discrimination becomes unintentional. Like you don't have to *intend* to do something. It just becomes natural.

**Student 2** [00:35:51] So it just kind of becomes 'right action' through practice.

**LMC** [00:35:54] Yeah, it's a way. You can do it that way. And gradually then it leads to the place you're talking about, though not in any rational way. One taste is not a rational realization. Whereas the six paramitas lend themselves easily to understanding. You know, if you're trying to not lie, the place that you start is kind of a gross level of lie. And more you practice that, the more you see that actually lying takes place rather continuously [laughs] in ways that even we don't see. So then the more we can see how we kind of trick and cheat ourselves out of things that previously we couldn't see, then we begin to see them. And that's a good thing. So gradually that unfolds also. One taste is just like, you know, if you had a 12-inch ruler, one taste would be just kind of like a half an inch down... from enlightenment. It's right on the edge.

[00:41:16] I think the exploration [or choosing session time(s)] is really valuable. What is benefit? If we all knew that the only way to get the benefit was to get up at 6:00, we'd say, we're going to get up at 6:00! Because there isn't anything else. That's it. And we also all know that if you got up at 6:00 every day for a month, getting up at six would be the obvious thing. You don't even have to try. It just happens.

[00:42:02] The real yardstick here that really *counts* beyond everything else is what gets you on the cushion. No matter how good six a.m. or four a.m., or three a.m. or... if that didn't get you on the cushion, it's a *useless* standard. So I think that the rub here is that it's impossible for us to

actually investigate closely. But we can ask the question, if more people were on the cushion at 10:00 a.m., would we do it? If more on it at another time, would that be a better time to have it? So I think that's the real baseline. How do you get on the cushion and do it? Sometimes when you're on the cushion and you have reasonable experience and you feel like your insight into things is beginning to deepen, you're happy to make certain kinds of sacrifices that seemed unreasonable before. So these are all things that I think that are worth looking at. We can't explore it completely here tonight or even in our first week or so, or month, at the new center. But I think it's worth putting them all on the table and asking the question, what do we get for it? I mean, I would I would project that more people would come at ten, than at nine. If that was the only standard. If that was the only thing, that would be kind of easy to make. I'm just not sure that that's the only measuring stick.

**Bill** [00:45:47] It may seem all very kind of mundane, but there is a way in which what we are doing, actually, is creating the container for the practice for the community. So it's not kind of a minor thing.

**sangha** [00:51:31] *dedicating the merit*