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*benefits of short times, our sense of self and 4 Immeasurables, aspiring to 'quickly' realize mahamudra, more on short times explaining how to stop before manipulating experience, need to habituate meditating, **Carrying Practice**: habituate meditating by doing it once every five minutes*

LMC [00:02:41] So we have a period now up until 11:00 when we finish when we... can have a conversation about... the practices this morning, but also in general, the meaning and practice of the Buddhadharma. So this is your time to ask questions, complain... whatever is on your mind.

Student 1 [00:03:42] So I'm gonna... I'm not sure if this is a question, an expression of frustration or whatever, but here we go. So we've been instructed in the past to count 21 breaths. In other situations, to count ten, three, five, and now... seconds. And I don't have a timer, so I can't tell how many seconds I'm breathing. So, um, I have to admit some frustration and confusion. And I guess all I wanted to say was that, what seems to be working for me, for want of a better way of putting it, is... getting very comfortable in my body and being very aware of it. Decreasing any, you know, if I'm holding some muscles tight, trying not to. Just making sure my back is straight enough so I can take a nice deep breath if that's what happens. And sort of following my breath. And I find that counting breaths to twenty-one is very helpful. And if I make a mistake, and I do notice my mind going off, one of my practices in a sense is to be gentle with myself and say, 'oh okay, let's go back'. And I don't know... it just... maybe because I've been doing it this way for long enough that it started to work over time. But I guess I felt uncomfortable with the idea of '*I've failed*', you know, if I don't stop my meditation right before my mind goes off. My mind is constantly going. At some point, after about ten or fifteen minutes, I find that the volume of the thoughts sort of decreases. And I'm just more aware. And that's when I get that sort of peaceful, relaxed time. But it takes some time. It doesn't happen in three seconds. It doesn't, you know what I mean... it just takes some time of just keep plugging away at it. And eventually the volume goes down... and I'm present. And that, of course goes away and it comes back. Goes away comes back you know. But as long as I don't beat myself up, and call myself a failure or... that seems to work for me personally. Don't know if you have any comments on that, but.

LMC [00:06:28] It's definitely the case that each one of us is slightly different. And so, I can remember there was a time... when the longer that I meditated, the better it got. And I can remember a time, the longer I meditated, the worse it got. And... you *can't* draw, I think successfully and meaningfully, a hard and fast system that we need to like... crawl through somehow. And so the *object* of dividing things up, is that we haven't done that so much. So it's easy to get a successful stillness, let's say, in a very short time. In fact, the shorter the time is, the more likely there is a small time when there was a stillness. And it's important to be able to recognize *that*... as much as it is to be able to recognize that we've been still for a long time. So that... we can work in *different* situations. I think one of the key things you mentioned was not beating ourselves up. There's *no* benefit in it. Absolutely none. Which is why I think it's far better that we engage in *some* way that we can recognize we've had a successful meditation. And there's no rule against sitting for an hour... and working with abject distraction and some stillness and so on. If you can do that, that's fine. I encourage everyone to... experiment with it.

[00:08:36] So there's some things that we don't experiment with too much. Such as... beginning the practice and thinking it's important for me to turn my mind from refuge in all of my worldly

pursuits to refuge in the Dharma. And there's even some experimental room in there, *too*. But... we understand that the reason we're all sitting here is because of our refuge in worldly things. That's the fundamental issue that we're dealing with. So, we can't recognize the nature of mind in the context of going for refuge in all of the worldly things that we go for refuge in. It's helpful to go back to that and study those things also so that we have a clear sense of what the motivation and intention is that, that is likely to bear deeper fruit. I don't hear anything you said that you said that sounds like it's something wrong with it or... not the case.

Student 2 [00:10:17] So, when in India, Khenpo Rinpoche spoke about ego-clinging and I've been paying a lot of attention to my own ego clinging. And then I was reading the piece that Tim sent out with regard to the mind training group, which one of the verses said basically, 'think nothing of yourself and think everything of others', which I've heard many times. So, when I notice the 'I' arising inside, I try to take a moment and ask myself, what is the 'I' and what substance does this 'I' have? And kind of staying with that and then trying to have compassion for the part of me that longs to be loved and longs to belong and... kind of the human nature of clinging to an 'I' and then doing loving kindness for all beings. And, I'm noticing just how strong... that pattern of grasping the 'I' is. And I would love to have your input about that and other ways of.... it's like a protector part of us, right? It seems like that that grasping 'I' part is a protector. Like wanting us to survive and wanting us to be loved and cared for in the world. And so, yeah, just whatever your thoughts are about that.

LMC [00:12:37] Thoughts on the 'I'.

Student 2 [00:12:37] The 'I'. [laughter] My 'I'. Not yours.

LMC [00:12:48] Are you sure? [laughter] There is nothing quite so good as being able to laugh at one's 'I'... you know. It really is, I think, critical. If you go for three or four days without laughing at the 'I' you're in trouble. You made a wrong turn somewhere. [laughter]

[00:13:24] One of the symptoms of that, is that we make too big an effort to separate ourselves from a sense of *self*. Which is the 'I', right? We *can't* separate ourselves from a sense of 'I' in the sense of... I'm gonna do this. I'm going to find it and divorce it. I'm gonna really not *have* an 'I'. And that statement, of course... you don't have to be too far into the whole thing to realize that... I'm not going to have an 'I'... basically, you just threw the key away. [laughter] It's a serious diversion to think that we will not have an 'I'. The sense of a *self*... is not the big problem. The sense of a self is our *commitment* to that sense. That I will nurture it. I will identify with it. Getting rid of it... may be at the point of enlightenment. But probably the day before, it's still there. So it's a mistake to think, certainly that I'm gonna beat it down. Obviously, that doesn't work, because then you've got to ask who's the beater? [laughs] And what are we beating? And why do I have so much blood on my head? [laughter] It's the identification, always the identification. You can be a great meditator and identify with it and you are no longer a great meditator. In that moment, you are... just confused.

[00:15:22] So a sense of... gentleness is really important. And if you're used to beating yourself up, of course, then that's difficult. One of the *benefits* of... investing time in the contemplation of the Four Immeasurables is... to engage in the Four Immeasurables for one's self. So we have compassion and loving kindness. We imagine that it's only for others. We imagine that doing it for ourselves is somehow... ego-clinging. Which is not necessarily the case. We can look at our own ego-clinging and feel... kind of sorry, like gawd, this is really painful! And, in the same way

that we would generate some compassion and loving kindness for another person, we also can generate that for ourselves. Do we not deserve it? I mean, we're making an *effort* to benefit others. Our culture and our teaching is not... a suicide mission. It really is meant to raise *everyone*. And we can't raise *others* if we can't raise ourselves. We *have* to be able to do that. So the compassion, the loving kindness for ourselves... when we're suffering, that we would be free of that. And when we're happy that we would have that happiness and it would be stable. All of those things, those are totally good... to wish for and pray for... for *ourselves*. When we do it for ourselves, we find it almost like... we suddenly realize we're doing it for others. Because that's the cause and effect... the way that it works. When I see someone else suffer and I think to myself, I wish that they could be free of that suffering. I immediately feel *myself*... a little free of the suffering! So this is just the truth of interdependence. We move into that stream of interdependence and the teachings are a means to engage in that stream, skillfully.

[00:17:57] And then we come to the third of the Four Immeasurables, *Joy*. Which we often have some confusion about. Like, what is that joy for? And why would it be there? And the usual explanation for that is... the joy arises when we witness... either *ourselves*, or *others*, engaging in something which we would naturally call... forget all the rubrics and the technical stuff... that we would naturally call virtue. Somebody is hungry. You give them a dollar. There's a certain kind of virtue in just giving something. And the virtue is lost if we don't recognize it. We *know* we've recognized it when we feel a sense of joy.

[00:18:55] And sometimes we have a kind of cynicism about ourselves. Like, I can do virtuous things because really, I'm just trying to build some merit so that *I'm* better. Or I'm doing virtuous things so that other people will see that I am generous or I'm kind or whatever it is. It's helpful for us to recognize when we do something positive and get good at it. Because when we see that we've done something positive, something that we would call virtuous, that's good for me, it's good for others. We then want to do more of it. And there's a sense of joy that comes from that. ... If you say, you're having a hard time. And you and I sit down and we talk. And I say... "I see what you did yesterday. You did these things to help other people." Why is that not joyful? *I* feel joyful that you *did* it. I see what you did. I see that's good. I feel a sense of joy. Why are you not feeling some joy? And in the context of that conversation, then... we loosen up. We loosen up and we feel some joy.

[00:20:24] And then there's the equanimity piece. Which is just extremely rich. And we tend to limit that, *that* piece by virtue of thinking of it from the standpoint of equanimity in relationship to *all* sentient beings. That's a really hard. So forget it! [laughs] Put it aside... for a while. It's *really* hard to feel a sense of equanimity with all sentient beings. First of all... you've met some sentient beings in your life that it was really hard to feel equanimity for them! And, you know, there's some more of those out there. [laughter] So it's that it's not quite easy to *do* that. But we *can*... generate equanimity... in the *sense* of just a principle to begin with. Like I understand that... those beings who do things that hurt others, it comes from a sense of confusion. Even I don't know who they are, I feel certain that it comes from a sense of confusion. That if they actually could relate to a sense of loving kindness with all beings, they wouldn't do that. They'd do something else. So they just haven't stumbled into that place yet. But it's *there*. So that's a fundamental principle and teaching in Buddhism. It's there! Like we say, the awakened mind is there. The issue is not the awakened mind. The issue is... we don't recognize it. It's not like some have it and some don't!

[00:22:15] Equanimity... with our own experience... is really quite profound also. Equanimity with our own experience. Like whatever occurs, whatever experience I have... then, I try to see its

nature. So if I'm confused, I try to see the nature of the confusion. If I'm feeling joyful... I try to see the virtue that inspires the joy. So this is an issue of recognizing interconnectedness, right? We're really talking about... how many dots can you connect to these things, so that it starts being automatic. You walk down the street, you see somebody. You smile, they smile. You connect the dots. I was a *cause* of that person's joy in that moment. Then you feel like... that's worthy of... smiling. [laughs] Worthy of feeling joyful about. It's not a giant thing. I didn't save somebody's life, in the short term. But I played a role in bringing some joy to somebody. Personally, I feel like that's the most easy thing to do in the entire world... is to bring joy to virtually everybody that you meet during the day. It's *almost* simple.

Student 3 [00:24:06] I've come to realize that... on our path there's nothing that's going to come quickly.

LMC [00:24:16] Why do you say that? [laughter]

Student 3 [00:24:18] And yet at our dedication... I see that... we're asking to quickly realize something... very important. So why are we doing that? The quickly part.

LMC [00:24:46] If you're hungry, you might say a prayer that means... may I find food quickly. It's not like you're gonna *find* food quickly, but there's some good reason for it. We're saying here... 'by this virtue', which is really the virtue of going for refuge and generating the wish to benefit others and so on, then 'may I quickly realize Mahamudra', which is really the full realization. So 'May I quickly realize Mahamudra and establish all beings without exception in this state'. So I'm saying... what I can do *now*... is not as much as I *could* do in the future. And may that gap close so that the benefit that I could bring to others would be... more than it is now, more skillful, more helpful. And then it's just kind of a natural thing to say, may I do it quickly. Making that wish, I don't know that that actually makes it *happen* quickly or stands in the way. But it might, in some way, inspire us to... instead of engaging in meditation practice for half an hour a day, maybe it would inspire us to do it for an hour a day. Like, whatever we can do to nurture a sense of deepening connection... to our own internal realization. I think that's all it is. Wishing that it be quick, under some circumstances, might actually help it along. I don't know. Personally, I'm with you. I've given up on quick. [laughter] And it's funny how many things you can give up, and then the thing that you gave up, you immediately get something that you couldn't get before because that's somehow... it was 'the hanging on' was the problem.

Student 4 [00:27:06] This is in regard to our practice this morning. I'm really fascinated by the idea... you brought it up a few weeks ago... just about stopping before your mind gets interrupted. And according to your instructions today, there's a lot of time... basically, half the time you're spending *in* meditation, half the time you're letting it go. And for me, I'm just wondering... like what do I do when I'm letting it go? Because I think during those in-between times, I think I just needed a little bit more guidance for what to do. You've meditated for, say, three breaths. Now you've let it go. And then you're going to do it again. So just in those in-between times..., I'm not quite sure what to do with that time. Like when you've let the meditation go, you said to do it, say, for ten seconds or so and then just let it go.

LMC [00:28:04] You're not sure what to do with that time?

Student 4 [00:28:06] Yeah. Because I think I was falling into things like suddenly...

LMC [00:28:10] What a great puzzle. [laughter] Are you saying that you never take a moment and not do anything?

Student 4 [00:28:24] Well, I guess I was wondering if it was a little bit destructive, the in-between times for me, because then I'll start thinking about something I had to do or, you know.

LMC [00:28:34] So, here's the instruction that's saying to me... on this score. Because I can say that for the first ten years of being connected to Dharma and meditation, I *never* ended a session before I was distracted. Never! And, you know, I kind of tongue-in-cheek say, well, that explains a lot. It's like we *train* ourselves... to be distracted and pretty soon we train ourselves to engage in distraction during the meditation. It's almost like... no one will notice... which is truly the case. [laughter] But, but we also, we also don't feel like we're progressing. Which I can *also* say in the first decade, I wondered over and over. Like, what am I doing? It's not working! And in a certain way... yeah, it's not working. There's no *'it'* there. And what is working anyway? There's a lot of confusion built into it. But just in our ordinary sense of... I should at least be feeling a little less distracted, a little less anxious, most of the time and all. And I think I kind of fooled myself, also along the way, Like, yeah, that's working. Because I don't tend to be anxious *anyway*. So then it was easy to label myself as not anxious as the fruit of the practice.

[00:30:22] The point here is that... it's a little more nuanced than... I sit down and we're not talking about get yourself a stopwatch, you know, and time this thing! It's an issue of... can you bring your awareness to the object of your meditation, whether it's the breath, whether you've got something you've laid down there and you just put your awareness on it or... it's an *experience*. Like somebody said something and it made me feel good or it made me feel bad. So you just put your awareness on that experience.

[00:30:59] As soon as you put your awareness on the experience, pretty soon you're in an elaborating mode. You're elaborating the memory of it. So... how do you beat that? You *stop*... before that happens. You put your awareness on it like... I want to put my awareness on... the experience of... like you ask a question. I have an experience. I also have an intellectual experience. I'm trying to listen and understand what you're saying, right? So I'm having *two* experiences. The kind of a conceptual experience, which is very weak. And an experience of... somebody asking a question they wish to have some clarity from. So if I can put my awareness on the clarity just in the kind of a manner of... [demonstrates by holding stick, deliberately placing it on table, momentary pause] ... this is my awareness. And then just see that experience. That experience will quickly become... well, this is not so great. Or some other thing. Therefore... it *was* great. Just before you said... "this is not so great." So it has to be like... [repeats example of placing stick and briefly pausing] ... done. And little by little, literally over months, maybe, maybe over years, we get *better* at resting the awareness and just *completely* letting go and the mind settles around it.

[00:32:40] In a certain way, there is teaching on this that... the experience is where there is power, where there is energy. I mean, energy that we raise around things when we get... feeling *conflicted* in some way. There is a kind of energy. That energy... is what can either... make it impossible to rest the awareness on the experience. Or... it can be the very thing that magnetizes... the awareness to the experience. And it can be kind of *corrupt* in the manner of... we see the experience, we *feel* the experience, and then we start talking to ourselves about it, conceptualize it. That corrupts it. But the energy that's there in that experience can be very helpful. But you *can't* manipulate it. It's more like... we need to rest the awareness there like it's

being magnetized. Like the two are coming together, the experience and the awareness. We just want them to, like come together, rest together.

[00:34:07] It's better... way better to do that for like just... [repeats placing stick with quick pause] ... finished. Than it is to try and hang on to it and extend it. When most of the extension is actually a distracted state. And *that's* what we remember afterwards, is the distracted state. Not that the memory *itself* is of any use whatsoever. But the fact that we *feel* like... I *can't* do this. That's a problem. So... we did it! We brought the awareness down. We just rested it there. It's... we *did* it. It's done! So we have this sense of success. So if the success runs one or two seconds only, and we can recognize it as... that's it! We now, we'll be able to recognize two or three seconds, which will become ten or fifteen and so on. We know what it *looks* like. And we can go for decades! Personal experience [laughs] and never know what it's supposed to look like.

[00:35:22] The problem with that is... that almost everybody gives up somewhere in there. Because we're not stupid! So, why would you continue doing it... if nothing comes? Well for me, it was because the teacher that I had felt to me like... the best that there was. And that it was *great* just to be *connected* to that person. That kept me doing it. But it didn't actually... bring about what we're now talking about. You have an experience. You rest your awareness. Everything is very clear, for one, two, ten seconds, fifteen. That instruction never occurred... during that time. And so it felt disabling. It felt like it's never gonna happen. It doesn't matter how smart you are. And that really *is* the case. It doesn't matter how smart you are. The intellect does not play a role in this. Its best role is to keep out! You know, it's just enough to get you to put your awareness there. Once you kind of like begun to settle... the intellect *will not bear any fruit*. Best case... is it fails *utterly* to analyze the situation. This is about experience. The intellect we can get out of books, even. This is about experience. Okay? You're going to report back? It's critical to report back. [laughs]

Student 5 [00:37:17] I have a question. I actually have a comment and questions, I guess. Everything that's been said so far has been really helpful to me. I haven't been here in a while. And so the three words that came up as I was listening was discipline, ego and experience just now. So just listening to what you had to say speaks even more to what I was thinking about earlier. I haven't come here because I don't have a car anymore. And so I've been attached to this idea that because I don't have a car, it's difficult to get here. You know, I lost my car in the summer and suddenly I found myself having to get around on public transportation. Talk about changing an attachment to who you are when you don't have a car anymore. But it's been wonderful. I mourned it for a day. And then from the second day, which was the 5th of July, when I had to get on a bus, I thought this is exactly what I needed to have happen. I didn't know, but I was so attached to my little Ford Focus. And when it was gone, when the bank took it away, suddenly I found myself in this position of... connecting with people at a level that I had not had to do since I was in graduate school. So there I was on an everyday basis, you know, connecting to people and seeing parts of the city that I had not seen because I'd always been in a car. So for me, the experience of having had this, what I would have called originally a horrendous experience... and I was waiting for six months for the bank to come and get my car. And it finally came and, and it was an awakening. And it *has* been. It's been fabulous. But... it didn't bring me to the point of being more *disciplined* in coming here just because it's a little farther away to get here by bus. So, uh, I guess what I heard earlier today as we were entering meditation, was the discipline part of what you were talking about. To be able to focus, even if it's for a few moments on, you know, on clearing the mind so as to be more aware. And I think that I just wanted to say I appreciate being here because I know that, um, I need to have that

lesson. And all of these things, everything that I've heard today, has just reinforced the idea that I gotta get on that bus on a Sunday morning and get here because it's been very beneficial and it's beautiful. I haven't seen it since you all worked on it, so it looks gorgeous. But I guess I just wanted to ask you if there's anything that you can comment on in terms of discipline. From what I've just said, I would appreciate it.

LMC [00:40:19] In terms of discipline? ... Well, I'm not sure that this addresses the issue of discipline. But if we're talking about consistent practice... I think what we're looking for here is... let me put it in these terms. We are all able to breathe. There's not very many people who need to exert *discipline* to remember to take another breath so that they're not falling down dizzy and out of breath. There are few people like that, but mostly not. And in the same way... our meditation really needs to be like our breath. Like, it's just... it doesn't *require* a sense of discipline, a sense of remembering to do it. And so I found that... useful as an approach...as an approach to meditation. But in order for that to take place... so just my own personal story about it is... that I *needed* to meditate like 100 times a day. So that it became like a *deep* habitual pattern. So, normally we shout back at deep habitual patterns like this is not Buddhism... to have deep habitual patterns. Our job is to *undo* the deep habitual patterns. The problem is, the methods to undo the deep habitual patterns require a deep habitual pattern. [laughter]

[00:42:27] But as an *antidote*... to *complacency*, to a willingness to have confusion... and anger and jealousy and pride and greed and all of these things... it's not just good enough... to meditate two hours a day and then go about business as usual. So that by the time we meditate again, everything that we were working on has like... the tide has come in again. And also there's no joy in that. We're constantly beating the devil back. I found and I still find, that... meditating regularly every hour is really helpful. And of course... we're driving around, we're riding buses, we're walking, we're shopping, we're doing all of these things, and we generally think this is another problem. We generally think I'll do it when I get home. When I get home, I'm tired from shopping. ... It's the wrong approach. From my own experience, it's much more helpful... to meditate... at least once every five minutes. Which doesn't mean you carry a cushion and sit down in the middle of a grocery store. [laughter] You know, sometimes we just can't *get* this thing. It's so simple! We *stop*... and look at things a hundred times a day at least. At *least* 100 times a day, we stop and look at something. When we stop and look at something, how about we look at our own experience? In that moment, I just look and see.

[00:44:26] It's like I go to New Seasons and I think... I'm gonna stop and get lunch at New Seasons. It's inexpensive, pretty good and all. And then I see... hmm. They didn't put any lunch out today. Now I have... 'an experience'. So normally the experience is followed by the *conceptual* curse. Damn. Now, what am I gonna do? Buy a carrot? That doesn't feel like much. So, my mind can spin around in *that* place or... there's a certain level at which to rejoice in that. An experience. It's not a dim experience... it's like I'm hungry! So I put my awareness on the experience of the hunger. Not like some *big* deal. It's just that rather than focus on... the *disappointment*, which is also a *great* experience. It's a great experience because it's powerful. Without the power, we have no inspiration to put our awareness on. It's a magnet! If we only could just use it. Like oh, I see. I just put my awareness there. I don't *need* to like give up lunch and say, Oh, it's okay. I don't need lunch. Damn. ... Just put your awareness on the experience. Let it rest and *not* for ten minutes. Not for one minute. Just for a few seconds. So that we actually have the immediate experience... I recognize the experience of disappointment. So there it is. My awareness is on it. It's just kind of floating there... and then let it go. And then if it's coming back... put your awareness on it again.

[00:46:22] It's like *Hallelujah* [laughs] ... you know. It's okay! You're gonna have the experience *anyway*. Your ability to put your awareness *on* it is the ignition key... that makes it possible... to have *insight* through your own experience. Your next-door neighbor's experience is of no use to you. Yours is *everything*. And the experiences unfold. So if you want to go to the really kind of deep perspective... they unfold from what we call the Dharmakaya. Continuously, they never stop, day and night, 24/7... experiences roll. We see them sometimes and other times we don't. We rarely recognize their nature. So in a certain sense, we are '*normally*'... you could say... not in necessarily a negative way, but we're just kind of... passive receivers of it. Sometimes we feel victimized. Otherwise, we feel lucky to have a good experience. But do we stop and put our awareness on the experience? Which is a *necessity* in order to attain realization. Absolutely essential. And here we are, continually getting the experience and just like throwing them away like... they're nothing. We sit down on the cushion. 'I hope I have an experience.' You've been having them all day long! [laughter] but not paying any attention. So you basically trained yourself to ignore them when... the *gold* was in your hand already.

[00:48:08] When I worked at a corporation after retreat, which was a wonderful experience after retreat... and they had big windows like many big buildings do, and so I would walk from one place to another regularly to do things. And I would stop and look out the windows. Like amazing to look out and see the San Francisco Bay and things happening and trains and cars moving. And just for a moment, just have the experience of... looking out the window. And sometimes I have the experience of... it's amazing! Like, here I am in this place. It's like it's easy to do this work. People get unhappy. It's easy to bring some joy to them. It's not difficult. It's great. And I got more money than I ever had in my life because big companies pay a lot of money. I never worked for a big company. So it was a lot of money, relatively speaking. And it was a cause for... if I knew that if I was going to meditate, I had to do it during the day. Like all day long. And once it became interesting to watch the experiences unfold, then I also found that it was interesting to do it while carrying on a conversation.

[00:49:36] You have a conversation with somebody... you're having an experience. One hundred percent *for sure*, you're having an experience. It's interesting. It's boring. It's threatening. It's like whatever it is, it's like... there is an experience unfolding. And we're *participating* in it. So it's even more of an experience. And how often do we put our awareness on it? And we have all the tools to do that. So any day that we go home and didn't bring our awareness... to our own experience, we have... really missed... big opportunities. ... And in the midst of settling our awareness on those experiences, of course, those Four Immeasurables are great. Loving kindness and compassion for *me*, loving kindness and compassion for those who I *witness*... having problems, having joy. Experiencing joy. Sharing the joy with them. Like that's going on, there's more experiences unfolding all the time. Those Four Immeasurables are... you might say... they *encourage* the flow of experiences. ... Okay? Good enough? The bell always comes just before something really dire. [laughter]

sangha [00:51:45] *dedicating the merit*