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long retreat as a way to learn techniques and use the tools, the 4 Immeasurables, we rely on others for our own happiness and more on bodhicitta, some on lucid dreaming, working with distractions, including using curiosity about the nature of our own mind, no beginning no end, teacher & student responsibility and usefulness of sangha

LMC [00:00:18] So we have some time, up until the end of this session, to entertain ourselves with questions. And the idea really is to gain some clarity. So whatever it is that isn't clear in our minds about the Dharma, in any way, it's important for us to get clear on it to the degree that we can. So, not all things are *capable* of being clarified by talking about them. Sometimes talking about them... goes the other way. [laughter] Yeah. But that's what this session is about - to clarify... and address any issues that you have. So that means the ball is in your court.

Student 1 [00:01:38] Good morning, Michael.

LMC [00:01:43] This sound system is like really disturbing. You hear a voice. You can't tell where it's coming from. You look around talking. Nobody's talking. Okay. Yeah.

Student 1 [00:01:58] So, I'm talking to you. And this is my sister, who's visiting me. And I was talking to her yesterday about the three-year retreat... and you know, the idea that people do not sleep lying down, that they sit... upright when they're asleep. And I tried to give her, to the best of my understanding, reasons for why one might do that. And so a couple of questions came up. One was, do other Buddhist traditions do this, that you know of? And secondly, why *do* we want to cultivate that lucid awareness while we're asleep? Can you explain more about why that's of value?

LMC [00:02:53] Well, first of all, I don't know of a Buddhist tradition that isn't weird [laughter] and I'm pretty familiar with them. I like to say that we're the weirdest just because... we like to be the best at everything. [more laughing] But, I actually do think that... there are challenges, let's put the 'weird' moniker aside for a moment... there are challenges in whatever the tradition is. And if there *aren't* challenges, probably... they're not very successful then at accomplishing what we set out to do, in general, in Buddhist traditions. Because we're trying to work with the causes of our personal and collective pain... and suffering. So, I don't know how you... accomplish... freeing yourself *from* that without going into it. It seems to be that there isn't any other alternative.

[00:04:13] So when we look at the teachings in this tradition, but really, I think I could say and even make a case for it, that no matter what the tradition is, it's all about dealing *with* that suffering. Because the suffering is not... specific to particular traditions, it's *specific* to human beings. And beyond that, even animals. So, the practices in all of the traditions, if you look at them close, you can see... that they *all* share this same intention to provide the means to... free oneself from suffering.

[00:05:05] So then, of course, one needs to ask the question at some point, what is suffering... exactly? And so that's a whole other thing. That's where we sometimes start with the Four Noble Truths and just follow it right down, because that's the very beginning, *really!* We don't usually start there. Like, I wouldn't walk in here in the morning and start with the Four Noble Truths... generally... because it's too big of a subject. So, we want to come in and have a sense that we

got *something* by the end of a couple of hours. That's hard to do. But the Four Noble Truths, you can get many texts and look at them and the explanation... of suffering and its causes are really, really clear. So, it's easy to even get that personally. But we could do that here too, have a class on the Four Noble Truths, at some point. Might be good to do. So, let's see, what did we get and what did we miss? ... What just happened? ... Do we have more?

Student 1 [00:06:17] That was helpful. And now can you speak *specifically* [laughter] to why we would cultivate... a somewhat lucid state while dreaming. While sleeping.

LMC [00:06:58] Oh, why people would be drawn to being sleep deprived? [great eruption of laughter] Something like that.

Student 1 [00:07:09] Well, it sounds like you were saying that it creates an obstacle that allows us to go into our suffering... in order to come out beyond it, perhaps.

LMC [00:07:21] What creates an obstacle?

Student 1 [00:07:23] Sleeping in an upright posture.

LMC [00:07:26] Oh, I see. No, I don't think that creates an obstacle.

Student 1 [00:07:30] No? So, talk about it.

LMC [00:07:31] So in an ordinary way, we might say, yeah, that creates an obstacle to my *sleep*. But that in and of itself does not necessarily mean that we have an obstacle to clarity and understanding, the nature of mind and so on. So, mostly we would say, well, I can't quite imagine how... in situations where I can't lie down and sleep that that's going to be helpful to see the nature of mind. So, we need to just put that piece aside for a moment. It's kind of, in a certain way, what comes to mind is... the last time that I saw Winter Olympics and there were like these fantastic gymnasts, you know, they're just like... they do amazing things with their bodies. And one could ask, how do you do it? Why do you do it? All sorts of those things. And, you might get an answer, which is kind of useful and interesting, but probably... you're not going to *do* that.

[00:08:34] So, in this case, we *want to do these things*. And when you think about the practices that are involved in the long retreat of three plus years, it's just that... many of the practices that are done, such as sitting up while you sleep... or not sleeping and sitting up... and maybe not needing the same kind of sleep... or feeling like you need it, but... discovering along the way that actually there's something helpful about it. So, in the easiest, simplest way, we could say... that... going on a traditional three-year retreat definitely does *not* have a goal... of giving you more sleep. You could have gotten that for a lot less money and a lot less effort by numerous other ways.

[00:09:37] The goal here is simply the goal of the Buddhist practice itself. Which is to abandon from our own mindstream... the very things that cause us suffering... that we don't recognize the role that we play in it. And so, when I have a problem, I look for... who I can lay the blame on. I mean, that's just natural. We do that all the time, without thinking about it. We don't think, now who am I gonna blame? We just immediately say, "It's you!" You did it or this happened or something else happened. We don't have the *tools* to take *full* responsibility for our own experience. And that's what the practice and the path is actually more about. Like how do you

master those tools? Get them. Work with them continuously. Many people in this sangha right here have the tools. *You* have the tools. I know you do.

[00:10:41] So having the tool is one thing. It's like, you could go in Steve Parker's woodshop at home and you would have all the tools to make fantastic things. So why is it that you can't make them? The tools themselves are not sufficient. We have to work with them and learn how to work with them. And in this case, it means... on a long retreat, we want to work with those tools 24/7. No break whatsoever. That's what we *want* to do. That's the way that we *get* to that place. Not everybody gets to that place, even on a long retreat. But... almost all of them, I would say *all* of them who come in at the beginning of the retreat and stay to the end, they will say... that they had the experience of... enormous benefit, even though they're not enlightened yet.

[00:11:46] We don't say that the three-year retreat leads to enlightenment for the *great* majority of people. It does lead to an understanding of things that get you very close to, and regular insights into the nature of mind. That doesn't mean that it's stable. I can jump into a lake and swim 100 yards across the small lake. No problem. The Pacific Ocean, not quite so good. [laughter] Yet, there are people who do long swims and do amazing things with their bodies. Here we want to do amazing things with our minds. And the tools of the practices of the vajrayana, for example, and the mahayana traditions and the Theravadan tradition too, are all contained within that retreat and the teachings for it.

[00:12:49] If one does it correctly, their lives are guided by the schedule. They eat by the schedule. They sleep by the schedule. They practice by the schedule. They practice together by the schedule. They practice alone by the schedule. And so, many things are learned from something like that. You learn to abandon your own agenda and take on the *other* agenda, which you understand is actually the agenda that you went into the retreat to master. But during that time, of course, we take all of the things that we had with us *before* the retreat. All of our likes and dislikes. And of course, there's always people on the retreat that we hoped wouldn't be on the retreat. [laughter] And it's usually mutual. So that's going to be a problem. Those things all go with us. Then we have to work with *those* things. Which, of course, we could say... should have worked with them from the time we were 15 years old, but... we managed to avoid them.

[00:14:01] So many of our mental habits we managed to avoid working with. And so, when we get on retreat, you're *forced* to work with them. Because *that's* what you're working with now. And at a certain point, everybody has a sense of... what am I going to do? I wish I hadn't done this. I wish I wasn't on retreat. On any given day, you could wish you weren't on retreat. Any given week. Any given month! But for most people, it comes full circle and you have the sense of, no, actually I set out to do this. I put all the things in place to do it. Now I'm doing it. As the months go by and the years go by, it becomes psychologically more difficult to decide to leave. Like I did this much. It's kind of like you're working for a PHD, would you leave in the last month? No matter how much you hated it, you would probably stay. And it's a lot the same. That's kind of how we are as human beings. But there's no... assumption, certainly no guarantee... that any given individual has attained any certain level of stable realization.

[00:15:20] The three-year retreat, while it's rare for people to do that kind of thing, is nonetheless considered a beginning point. It's not a beginning and an end. It's still the beginning point when the retreat is over. It's like... teachers often say, now you actually know how to continue at the end of the retreat. You have instructions for dozens of practices, the most complex and the most deep practices in the lineages. And you know how to do them. So, if that's what you want to do, now you know how to do it. Those are not the problem. Even when

you know how to do it, do you do it? [laughter] Or does it just remain an aspiration gradually morphing into a grand disappointment? Sometimes that's it. Sometimes you come out of retreat and you want to do it, you can't do it, and years later, out of *great* disappointment, you finally rise out of that and actually do the practices. So, no guarantee that that's the wrong method. Could be the right way for any given person.

[00:16:39] I'm not sure how much more to say about it. Sleep deprivation is a terrible thing. And that is not really what the, what the retreat is about. But I can say with certainty that I don't think anybody manages to escape sleep deprivation. Not that it's part of the retreat, not that one should become that, but... I've had a *lot* of sleep deprivation that I never intended to have and certainly wasn't caused by any of my practice, but by other things, physiological, mental things, all sorts of things play into that. When it comes to overcoming our own causes of suffering... the first thing we have to do is *see* it.

[00:17:26] So just like this morning's practice... we have some kind of suffering, mild or big. The first thing we have to do is *see* that. We have to *see that suffering*. Not... seeing what somebody else did to us, to make us suffer, but seeing our own mental states. Mostly it boils down to grasping and aversion. I have a '*really like such a nice meditation*' and we immediately draw the conclusion that we have gone over the hump and we're now in the place where... everything is gonna be good. And almost before you finish saying that, it's not so good. So... in other words, it never ends. You just have to keep at it. And, not all the practices on long retreat are for everybody. Some... end up... with one or two practices that were on the retreat. Others don't.

[00:18:42] There's a wonderful, there's a wonderful little teaching on this that is really quite nice. We have a practice that we call The Four Immeasurables. I think probably almost everybody here is familiar with them, but I'll just mention them for those who may not know about them. The Four Immeasurables are divided into what you might call four wishes. There is the practice of loving kindness and compassion. The compassion piece is about wishing that all sentient beings are free of suffering and its causes. The loving kindness is about the wish of having the experience of loving kindness, its causes and its results. The things that bring positive experiences to us that when we wish that for others, we call that loving kindness. ... It's not *immeasurable* loving kindness. So the underpinning of that loving kindness needs to be... that we *experience* that loving kindness for *all* sentient beings without a single exception. Not most! Oftentimes we joke, all but one. There's one person I can't do it for. It's a little bit of a joke. But embedded in that joke is also some truth. Like we find ourselves picking and choosing who we make the wish for freedom from suffering for. That is to say, it's kind of like we have a sense of there are certain people who *deserve* their suffering.

[00:20:50] Deeply, we need to abandon that and hold onto a slightly different thing, which is ...there is no such thing as someone who is *not worthy of* full enlightenment. Worthy of freedom from suffering. Worthy of unbounded joy. It's like, everyone is worthy of that. You can't actually engage deeply in the practice without that aspiration. And that's a hard one. That's maybe one of the most difficult ones on retreat because... it's inevitable. People go on retreat. They're nice people. They're gentle people. They're determined to engage in the practices. And then things go wrong. They get sick. Maybe they think the cook did something to the food. Maybe the cook *did* do something to the food. It's like... you know. [laughs] And, so little by little, the unbounded, the immeasurable loving kindness, compassion and joy come about.

[00:22:03] I want to add one more thing to it, which is actually not part of the teaching on the Four Immeasurables, but... there is a kind of hidden, disappointing truth. I suppose we can say

most things that are true are disappointing. In this case, it's about how we all sit down to practice... in order to free our minds from distress. In order to accomplish, maybe, a more joyful countenance. ... But if we look close at all of the practices, we can see... that there's an underpinning of all of it, which includes a sense of... *I need to feel better* from doing these practices. In other words, I *want* to accomplish the benefit of others, but my priority really is accomplishing my own benefit.

[00:23:13] And one could say that totally makes sense. Who would continue to engage in difficult practices if there was no personal benefit? But the other side of that is... because attachment and aversion - attachment to a sense of self and aversion to the challenges to that sense of self - are so potent that we find it difficult to practice exclusively for others. But somewhere along the way, the discovery has to be made... that you cannot accomplish your own benefit. Period. Cannot be had. And it's an enormous disappointment. You *rely*... upon all sentient beings... for your happiness... and for your realization.

[00:24:13] And so we need to come to this place of... honoring *all* sentient beings without exception and engaging in practice for *their* benefit. And gradually that... becomes clear. First, we recognize it... by virtue of... the joy that we get when we actually do something profoundly good for someone else. There's a joy that comes from that. We all have had that experience. Not just once. Probably many, many times. We write it off as an anomaly too easily, when in fact that *is* the entire path. If you look at all of the high practices, the difficult practices, the profound and the easy and the difficult. You'll see that in the mahayana tradition of Buddhism, which means also in the vajrayana tradition of Buddhism, it's *all* about... turning one's mind completely away from one's own benefit to the benefit of others. Without that... we can only chip away... at our own sense of discomfort, sadness, occasional joy. Which we then attach to... and it doesn't stay with us. It disappears. Which then turns into something that feels difficult and dark. And you look at the people who we have known. And the thing that comes to mind most clearly is the visit from Khenpo Rinpoche. He is the *embodiment* of joy and the embodiment of... caring about others.

[00:26:12] So, there's an easy lesson there. The benefit of being close to great beings is that we get to see this exact thing in action! Like there it is. Just unbounded joy, continuously. Not because he's an idiot, you know, which some people would say, 'Well, of course, he doesn't have to make a living. He doesn't have to do this.' I've heard many people say this. Doesn't have to do all these things that the rest of us have to do, which are sooo painful. But denying the connection between holding the benefit of others beyond one's own self... and the joy that comes from it... doesn't get you anything. It's far better to take it on as a practice, try it and see. What do you get for it? By focusing, as *exclusively* as you possibly can, on the benefit of others. Using every tool at your disposal... to help other beings. What do you get for it? We have to practice it. Just to put it aside as nothing is not the answer.

[00:27:32] So this all started with sleep deprivation. [laughter] I mean, you don't have to do a three-year retreat to feel sleep deprived. Let me just attest to that. [laughs] And it's common to feel a bit sleep deprived on retreat. And some of the practices that are the most profound require a change... in physiological patterns in order to have certain experiences. And... without engaging in certain practices that lead to some challenges there, it becomes difficult to actually embrace certain things. So I think a long retreat is weird. By any cultural norm, it's totally weird. But we've all been weird... because we've all been teenagers. So, we've all been weird and proud of it. [laughter] So I think that it's not so odd to look at these things and wonder like how strange this thing is.

Student 2 [00:29:03] Lama Michael, about lucid dreaming, when we're aware that we're dreaming, that it's not real. Would you say that the usefulness of that to us is that... we can use this dream-like illusory quality of dream to break down that hard shell that we put on our everyday reality? Is that what it's good for?

LMC [00:29:36] It's not good for any specific thing. You have to, I think, measure it from a Buddhist perspective. You need to measure the benefit of the lucid dream in terms of the meditation practices. So, that varies remarkably from one tradition to another. So, in the vajrayana, for example, the tradition of lucid dreaming is different than in some other traditions. It's even different within different vajrayana schools. But generally speaking, within the vajrayana, the whole point of lucid dreaming, begins with practicing to see, just what we were doing this morning... to see your experience. To see your experience. We almost never see our experience. We... *experience* it. But *seeing* the experience is a different matter. To actually see it while it's unfolding, with no ulterior motive or intention but to just see it... we almost never do that. We feel like our experience is something that happens to us. If I'm sick, that experience is happening *to* me. We don't, generally speaking, stop to just *look* at the experience of feeling sick and see what's there. That's not easy to do because... we're in avoidance mode. I don't want to look at what I feel when I feel bad because when I look at it, the first experience might very well be... that I feel even worse.

[00:31:26] Lucid dreaming in the vajrayana practices... is about stepping out of our normal mode of limitation. Whereas the dream potentially has no limitation. With no limitation at all! You can do all sorts of things in a dream and you *do*... all sorts of things in dreams... without intending to. But nonetheless, they're sort of magical in some way or they're horrific in some way. And those things in a dream, when we see those things, we easily have the experience that what we're looking at is illusory. Whereas out here, it's just the same illusory nature... but we experience it as solid. I ate bad food. I feel sick. I'm throwing up. It's like all these terrible things are going on. How many people stop and say, "This is illusory"? Or if they do, how many people stop and *experience* it as illusory? That isn't what we do. The dream practice is meant to give us an opportunity to experience all things as illusory. And in the context of that, we have the ability to do things that we wouldn't otherwise be able to do.

Student 2 [00:32:49] Thank you.

Student 3 [00:32:58] So I have a question about... meditation objects. I've only been doing formal meditation for about two years. But... during that time, I think I knew it before, but now I know it even more... my mind wanders *a lot*. I don't know... if there's like an average for how many, how much people's minds wander. [laughter].

LMC [00:33:27] Do not settle for the average. [laughter]

Student 3 [00:33:31] Good. Cause I don't know, it might be above average. Who knows? I have a lot of trouble. I think the more I meditate, the more I can see how much my mind wanders. Which in some ways is helpful. But then in other ways... potentially is not.

LMC [00:33:54] So, do you see your mind wander?

Student 3 [00:34:03] Hmm. I notice... more frequently when my mind is not on the object.

LMC [00:34:13] And you notice the mind is not on the object.

Student 3 [00:34:16] I notice that I've attached to something. I notice that I'm distracted.

LMC [00:34:22] Were you distracted *before* your mind was on the object? Or afterwards?

Student 3 [00:34:27] I don't know.

LMC [00:34:35] This is about, this is about building awareness about something. And it's... you know, it's like, I could explore this little thing here [picks up mantra engraved plaque] for an hour and see many things in it that I didn't see before, but it would kind of be in the 'so-what bucket'. You know, who cares? But, it's helpful, at least for a looong time, to care *deeply* about... our experience, within the context of our meditation. So that we develop the ability to see our experience unfolding. So that's really just like the shamatha, the calm abiding practice. So... generally in the calm abiding practice, a distraction is considered a defect. We're distracted. We've been taken away from our meditation. So every once in a while, we just need to have a look at something different.

[00:35:40] So depending upon where you are with practice, a distraction *can* be a defect. It can derail you. Maybe you remember something difficult that happened yesterday, or a year ago, or a decade ago, while you're doing your calm abiding practice. And suddenly that thing that you remember, you're just totally consumed by it. And we would say that's the nature of a distraction. You forget completely, what it is you're doing. But it's interesting and important to understand... that *if* in the midst of that distraction, you could bring your awareness to that experience and just let it be there... that's a far more profound thing, even though... the mind is like... a whirlwind swirling around with all these things. The distraction itself becomes the object of the meditation.

[00:36:48] So in the beginning, that's too much. Too much. Just that we would be able to see... oops, I'm distracted... is plenty good enough. But little by little, we need to kind of work on that, to make it more. And I think, the first big reason for it is... it's interesting. We really need to nurture a sense of curiosity about our own minds. Like, if I identify with being a good meditator and then I find out that actually I'm not that good. What good is it to nurture a sense of disappointment around that? But often that's what happens. So then pretty soon after that, you don't want to meditate anymore. Because who wants to meditate and it leads to disappointment. You know, I mean, smart people wouldn't stay in that rut. So, they leave.

[00:37:45] But we need to understand that meditation is all about one thing and *that* is... exploring the nature of mind itself. ... That's where everything happens. It doesn't happen somewhere else. Our distractions happen there. Our clarity happens there. Our anger happens there. Our loving kindness happens there. Our mistakes happen there. Our successes happen, everything happens there. ... So a deep curiosity about it. And taking the tools of the meditation, whether it's... whatever tradition it is, and working with those tools with a sense of... *what* could I be more curious about than my own mind? Curious about other people's minds is not so... helpful. They have their own issues.

[00:38:48] So you can use that also. That is to say, I'm having a real aversion today to what I ate yesterday. ... Then we can leverage that. Remember, *your* realization relies 100 percent...on other means. This is not just an idea. It's like, when you look at it really close, you realize... you cannot do it. And those of us who have been practicing for many decades... know, you cannot

do it. [laughs] It's not going to happen. Half your life went into it, and you're still not there. *It needs to be focused* on the benefit of others. Because *they* are the same as you are. You will discover the nature of your *own* mind by... offering all of your effort... for *others* to discover the nature of their minds. ... There is no other way.

[00:39:56] So the interesting thing is that The Four Immeasurables are often taught early on. Not after you've been doing long retreats and all these things. They're taught early on. Sometimes in the very beginning. Loving kindness, compassion, joy, equanimity... whoooh, equanimity is a *real* big one. *Immeasurable* equanimity. What does that mean? That *you treat all beings* with loving kindness, without a *single* exception. So, that gets kind of boring after a while. Then we want to try something else. This is where the fruit happens.

[00:40:39] I want to try something else and then maybe you have a really... distasteful encounter with somebody. Maybe it's your spouse. Maybe it's a friend. Maybe it's someone you just met. And you just become completely confused and attached and a strong sense of aversion, all these things coming on, that what we would call suffering. And in that moment, in enough time, you will see... there was my opportunity. There was my opportunity. *I alone* cannot generate that much aversion. I actually need help to feel *that* bad. [laughs] I can't do that on my own.

[00:41:31] So, that's where you put your awareness on the benefit of others. And the beginning point is... they have the same issue I have. They think other people cause them these problems. And as a result, more problems come. If you think of your spouse as the cause of your suffering, you'll end up in a divorce. I mean, just magnify that by as many ways as you can think about it. It doesn't work. So there has to be a way in order to *grasp* the problems that we encounter, our own suffering, and see them... accurately... in a way that we would never otherwise see them that way. So that we feel *grateful* for the thing that... five minutes ago was a problem, and now I see... the jewel. When we meet people like Khenpo Rinpoche, this is what you're looking at. You're looking at someone who does this, who has been doing this for so long, has studied with the most profound teachers... they don't try... it just happens like that.

[00:43:13] How we're doing? Are we late yet? I don't know your name. Did we meet before? I don't know either. That's why I asked. Anyway, anyway. Did your question get addressed? You're looking like maybe, maybe not. Which I can take as an honest response.

Student 4 [00:43:57] Lama Michael. This morning's practice, your suggestion of... not working with our breath, but using.... what comes up.

LMC [00:44:24] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. So you're referencing the practice of calm abiding, which the particular version that we normally use here, and there's literally hundreds of ways to engage in that practice, you're using the one where we follow our breath. We just like put our awareness on the breath. Comes the breath, goes the breath, comes the breath goes. That's a good practice. So...?

Student 4 [00:44:50] Well, this morning, though, you touched on something that has been niggling in the back of my mind for a while. Because my root lama, Khenpo Kunga will... when he's teaching... umm the insight and then leading to nature of mind... that there's always a 'knowing'. Like we don't *think* about it, but we know we're sitting or we know we're walking or we know. Just like I know that it's daylight and not evening. So, when working with my thoughts, it seems to be a real... fine line between thinking a thought and just being aware of a thought. And it might have been last week at the mahamudra teaching that Bill gave... he was saying, one

way to see whether we're *thinking* our thoughts is... if it makes sense. And I've been practicing lately, like forty-five-minute bus rides just sitting there and seeing people come go. Feeling the jounce or the jiggle, the jerks and then just being aware... or making up story. But there's an obvious... when I'm thinking a thought or making up a story about who just got on versus just being aware of a young kid just got on with his Mom. So, I'm wondering where *is* that like, line between thinking a thought and just being aware of it?

LMC [00:46:59] Well, it's about awareness. It's *about*... awareness. We often... have mental experiences, so we might call it thinking about, but in a broader sense, we could say that we're more or less continuously in the stream of our mental experiences. And as Buddhists, we would say that stream... did not begin with this life. And it does not end with this life. It has no beginning and no end. Now, conceptually, that might be difficult to completely embrace. However, experientially, when you look at it, you can see... there *is* no end. You cannot find the beginning. Whatever might have been the beginning was the cause of something that came from that beginning. And it just keeps rolling like that and... so I think it's best to simplify this. I want to simplify it because the simplicity is both at the beginning of the path... when we first sit down to meditate, the first time, we *must* have... something that is simple. And as time goes on, as Americans, we are drawn to complexity.

[00:48:39] But I remember once... thirty years ago, Kalu Rinpoche saying, there is no teaching of the Dharma, no matter how simple or how complex, there is no teaching of the Dharma that does not *contain the entire Dharma*. And at the time, 30 years ago, that felt like a ho-hum, go back to sleep, you know. Which mostly I did at that time when receiving teachings, I would daydream because I didn't know what to do with what I'm dealing with. Like look at your mind, it's like really difficult. You look at your mind and it's kind of like putting a marble on top of another marble. It just like falls off immediately. There's no space there *to rest with something*.

[00:49:35] What's critical, once we get past the idea that we *should* be practicing this profound thing, or that profound thing, and we should be getting better at this or that thing, we should be getting better at. ... My own opinion about this, for whatever it's worth, is that... we do much better... with difficult things like learning to meditate and, and to meditate deeply... we do much better... when we are inspired by and curious about... what we're doing.

[00:50:18] If the curiosity vanishes because the instructions were not clear enough, or we didn't get enough support, or there was something that wasn't really there... then I think it actually, from a *teacher's* perspective, I just want to put this in because I actually don't believe that everybody believes this... but I think that, anyone who's teaching the Dharma is responsible for the interest of the people who listen to it. That is to say, it's not good enough... to give an authentic teaching on the Dharma... and then it doesn't work for somebody.... and to write it off as... that's their problem. It's not good enough. Not to say that one can always do what's good enough, but I think it's important to recognize. I *try* to recognize that. Like when you say something, it needs to be understood. And the understanding... if it is not there, that's the person who said those things, who's responsible to get the understanding there! You can't just deliver it to the front door. You have to open the door and take it in, you know [laughs] and get it. And if that doesn't happen, you have to keep at it until it happens.

[00:51:38] So I think... that it's *critical* that if you practice the dharma... and you're going to stick with it... it's terrible not to stick with it. ... It's terrible not to stick with it. Then we feel like we have failed. And when we feel like we have failed, we have put aside what many of us think is the most profound opportunity in this life. So that's why I think that teachers should take full

responsibility for making *sure*. And as students, the responsibility of saying, "I don't get it quite." Or "This, somehow... I don't know what working for me would look like, but it isn't doing that I think." Until, you can kind of get in the saddle... and feel like this is what I really want to do. This is working for me. And little by little, then it can like build.

[00:52:34] But when we just follow the rule, 'you should practice this long every day and do this no matter what the outcome is'. At some point, people give up. And I used to have that problem, too, and think about how... well, you know, the teaching was authentic. I don't know why people are not getting it. I think that we need a front end on it. Like you get the teaching. It's authentic. Now you need... to get what is necessary, collectively and individually, so that people feel like... I can do this. And once you have that, you can then talk about it with other people who are having the same things. Help each other forward with it. That's what we call sangha. It's not just a passive group. It's a group that helps each other to understand. And you have a group of people who all practice and meditate. If there is enough people there, there are people who you are happy to connect with and talk about it and work with it. That's really the meaning of the community. Should be able to do that. If we *can't* do that, we need to put it on the table and work with it. ... Now, we've managed to be late, which is our general goal. [laughs]

sangha [00:54:23] *dedicating the merit*

LMC [00:55:07] Thank you so much for today.