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*habituate recognizing our experiences as they arise, witnessing the union of appearance and emptiness, impossible to accomplish own benefit except on shoulders of all sentient beings, **Carrying Practice:** each day make a connection and gift joy (Union Square & Safeway story), important to find a personally compelling practice, nature of mind is not just about generating experience of stillness, karma as unbounded interconnectedness, **Carrying Practice:** recognizing negative thoughts but not acting on them*

LMC [00:01:25] So, if there's anything that you would like to clarify or question... something to pursue that we haven't pursued... now is the time.

Student 1 [00:02:06] Is experiencing your experience the same thing as awareness?

LMC [00:02:22] Are you asking if there's a distinction to be made there? Between the awareness and your awareness of the experience... or what?

Student 1 [00:02:39] Is there a difference between awareness.... and experience?

LMC [00:02:45] Okay. ... You could have the experience without any awareness at all. Could be so... subtle... that you didn't even notice that you had the experience. Right? In fact, probably... that's where most of our experiences land. Occurring just while we're walking around or sitting or sleeping. And so, we don't... have an opportunity to put our awareness there. But the idea is to... recognize that an experience is occurring. And... then to place your awareness on that experience. Which is fundamentally... what we do in all of the Buddhist practices... from the most simple up through the most elaborate vajrayana practices. We're creating a situation, in that case, where an experience will arise. And a *particular* experience is meant to arise. And then we put our awareness on that. So, if we *don't* put our awareness on it, the exercise... is seriously compromised. We were really meant to have that experience. The visualizations, the mantras, all these things in the most complex ones... all those things are meant to generate an experience. And I think there's an underlying assumption... especially from old practitioners and certainly from our Tibetan teachers, that we would *have* our awareness on that experience as it arose.

[00:04:53] But we do not automatically go there. It's like, we get the *conceptual* piece, even just in simple calm abiding, we get the conceptual instruction, that is to say, the teaching is in English, so, it's conceptual [laughs] and we understand simply, the steps... to engage in the practice of calm abiding. Right? Whether we can *do* it is another question. But the first question is, can you just understand it and know what it is you're doing? And then... experiences arise...even while you're... setting up calm abiding in your own mind stream, experiences are arising. Like, from the moment you begin and before and after, they're always there. Because the mind never stops generating experiences.

[00:05:58] So... in the practice that... we're working on at this evening... the experience is meant to be seen. So, if we see the experience... not visually, but in kind of in the mind's eye, we are aware of the experience that we're having. Like, maybe the mind is very clear. Maybe it's very clouded. Maybe it's sleepy. Maybe it's sharp and awake. But... it's not so difficult to witness that... when it's happening. And... if we place our awareness on it, that experience has... a kind of draw. It needs to be intense enough to kind of magnetize us. In simple terms, to make us interested... in it. We have to be *interested* in it. Drawn to it somehow and often, that's a difficult

piece in our practice. No matter what that particular practice is, it's often not... compelling... to us. And so, we miss the opportunity to witness the experience. It just goes by. Like the vast majority of all of our experiences just flow by. It's kind of like... a cool breeze on a warm afternoon. We may just barely notice it and then it's gone. And we don't think about it.

[00:07:38] So, the idea is to develop the ability... almost, you could say, the habit... though good Buddhists don't promote habits. But we are definitely not good Buddhists, [laughs] so we want to promote the habit... perhaps we could invent another term for it... rather than the habit, but... we want to be able to promote the habit of recognizing, if we so wish, to recognize every experience which arises. We're sitting in shamatha. We're doing Chenrezig. We're engaging in advance practices or simple practices. They all come down to the simple truth that all of that is meant to generate an experience. ... And then put our awareness on that experience. Because that experience will not survive. If we're not able to bring our awareness to it fast enough and hold it there, we will not even witness the experience. So, we want to witness the experience while it's unfolding. ... We want to see it. Kind of come up and then dissolve. Like what we do when we engage in visualization practices, we generate the visualization. Then we dissolve the visualization. We even dissolve the visualization in stages. So, there's a *big* conceptual component. Like you generate the vision in this way and then you do this with it and then gradually you dissolve it. And it happens like this. All those pieces are there. It's meant to provide us with an experience that we *witness!* And that's, that's where the juice is, where we witness that... dissolution. In *particular*, where we witness the dissolution. ... Are you busy?
[laughter]

Student 1 [00:10:05] So, I think I have... I get tied around the words 'cause like... experience as a noun as opposed to experience as a verb.

LMC [00:10:23] Yes.

Student 1 [00:10:24] So experience as a verb is the same as awareness. I think it's like you're witnessing... it's just hard for me to think... I'm having this experience and I see that I'm having this experience. Is that experiencing the experience? It's just...

LMC [00:10:53] [picks up bell striker and points it at student] I'm having my pointer stick.

Student 1 [00:10:58] And maybe it's better that I don't even analyze it. Maybe just leave it at that.

LMC [00:11:03] Yeah. Oh yeah. There's a very nice line in the Mahamudra Aspiration Prayers, where the three approaches to the Dharma include the study, the contemplation *and* the meditation. The meditation follows the other two, which are... almost exclusively conceptual. And as Westerner's, because we are so good at the conceptual... and so habituated to the conceptual, it's often difficult for us to get out of the trap. Once we begin to have a sense of... ahhh, I understand what's happening here... it's difficult to let go of it. And yet, the truth is... it's only difficult because we *intend* to let go of it. We actually let go of it all the time. You know. ... Somebody gives me a little piece of candy to eat and I put it in my mouth. Mmm, that's nice. I'm having no conceptual thing around it at all. I'm not thinking... well, that's kind of chocolate and it has this kind of sweet... I'm not doing that. Usually, I'm just saying, "Oooh, that's nice. Thank you very much." And it moves very quickly out of the conceptual.

[00:12:26] So, we actually are capable of doing it. We don't need almost anything to do it. Somebody walks in the back and you don't see him and they say, *Hey!* You had an experience. And it had no conceptual component at all. Right? Now, it wasn't long enough... to actually... put your awareness on it. In all likelihood, it wasn't long enough. But if they said, "Hey, is anybody here?" You *could*, if you were ready... or if you were habituated to it, in the kind of positive sense you... could have just naturally put your awareness on that experience. And you might be irritated. You might have this sense of like... who *dares* to come in here and yell in the shrine room? But the important thing is, is that you are having an experience and... and it's *easy* to recognize that you're having the experience. That's all you need to do is recognize you're *having* the experience. And then, if you can *intentionally* leave your, let's say, *leave* your awareness there on that experience, you're... that's a perfect place to be. You don't need anything else. You just leave it there.

[00:13:52] Now, *that* experience will dissolve. Just like every one that we've ever had in this life has dissolved. This experience will dissolve also. So, what we want to do is... let's also acknowledge this thing, which is a little bit troublesome for many of us... we are not in control of when it dissolves. We might think we are, but actually we're not. And, the truth of that is contained in... the inability to hold it. You can try and hold that sound. The person came in and said, hey, what's going on here? And you had an experience and you witnessed the experience and maybe you say, well, if I like, can hold on to this experience, I can *really* do this practice. But by the time you think that, it's gone.

[00:14:51] So, a question to raise is... where does it go? And as 'smart' people in the West, we tend to think... that's a totally specious, irrelevant question. There is no answer to that question. ... But there is! There is meant to be an answer to that question. In order to get the question on the table, we have to first be able to put our awareness on the experience. So, when otherwise... we don't notice the departure of the experience. The person comes in and yells. And we have an experience. And then the experience is gone. And we don't notice the departure. But in the context of that little tiny like, few seconds... is contained... the experience of one of the most important teachings in the entire vajrayana and in the mahayana.

[00:16:04] And that is... that every experience that we have, like... I look at you, I see an image. And that's an experience. So, now I can just kind of *relax*... and have a sense of you sitting there. The analogy here doesn't work because what I need is to have the experience of you *having* sat there. Kind of like a memory. Like you got up, you walked in and we hadn't seen each other for a day. And so, we said, "Oh, hello. Okay, how are you? Everything's going well? Okay. That's good." And then... you're gone. I'm gone. So, we're not in the same place anymore. But *in* that meeting, there was an opportunity... to recognize that an experience was here. And I put my awareness on that experience. And the memory itself... is not yet faded.

[00:17:12] And so, I have the memory, which is an experience also. I put my awareness on it. Somewhere along the way, I will notice... it's no longer there. And if I am *able* to put my awareness on it while it's still very clear... I will possibly be able to see it literally dissolve. In either case, whether I saw it dissolve or not, we can say, authentically, in the recognition of the dissolution, whether it's instantaneous or slow... I am witnessing... the union of appearance and emptiness. About which... whole volumes have been written. Just about the union of appearance and emptiness. But it is also *conceptual* that even if you get a profoundly good understanding of it, it may miss the opportunity to actually have the *experience* of it, which is where the fruit is, of course.

[00:18:35] So, this is very simple. We had a discussion this afternoon here around it. And actually, if we had gone longer, it would have been a great example of how difficult it is to *stay* in the experiential. Because ...whether you call it an improvement or a degradation, we moved from the... even just the *conversation* of the experiential, into all of the conceptual issues around it. And we cheat ourselves in a certain way because we're so good at the conceptual that... we may, and I would say, we often do, think that we've had the experience of that appearance and the dissolution of it and the recognition of the union of appearance and emptiness. We may *think* that we did.

[00:19:37] And the whole *point* of putting the awareness *on* the experience, while it's kind of like, some kind of rising there for a little while, and then it's just gonna kind of like, it may just kind of vanish slowly, like a fade out or it may just go [bangs table] click. Gone. I don't even notice it. Minus the sound. [laughs] It's just gone. And we don't ask ourselves, like, "Whoa. That was... an experience. And now it's gone." We just totally take that for granted. And so, you can go your whole life and never recognize that profound single piece, which is in every... text... in the mahayana and beyond - Union of Appearance and Emptiness. The reason that the experience *can* arise... is because of its inherent emptiness. The reason that the experience can dissolve is because of its inherent emptiness. The emptiness was there with the appearance from the very beginning. ... So the likelihood that it would stay long is almost zero. The likelihood that we would see it, without any practice at all, is almost nothing. But if we can see it and understand that we are witnessing the nature of mind itself in the appearance and the emptiness in union... that's a pretty big shot. That's something to really look at.

[00:21:09] So, when you go to maybe a more complicated text, which is what started happening this morning, too many complexities because too many people had learned and written and conceptualized *correctly* from a conceptual perspective. But... no one mentioned... that we are not *in* the experiential in this moment. We are in the conceptual. It's *very* difficult in a group discussion to get into a non-conceptual place with so many brainiacs present. [laughs] It's just like it's one of those things actually better done alone. Just completely alone and just like work with it and work with it and work with it... 'til you get this sense of... you can start to *feel* like an experience is going to dissolve. But your awareness on it kind of feeds the stability of the experience. And so, it gradually, gradually dissolves. And sometimes then you can see the whole thing unfold and dissolve with this like, uncanny sense of... I get... non-conceptually what it means for the experience to dissolve into emptiness. Because the emptiness was always there. It's not something that came in to eliminate the image. It was always there. Okay?

Student 1 [00:22:49] To me, it seems like... I'm waking up... in every moment.

LMC [00:22:54] Yeah. Well, isn't that true? 'Cause the issue is that, yes, maybe we wake up in every moment, but we also fall asleep again in between the moments. [laughs] And sometimes we sleep for a long time. So, it's kind of... but even that is okay, because... the reason... there's a word for this that is not habit. I use the word habit because I think actually the word, the technical word for it is something else, but it really is the same thing. It is not the case, even from a Buddhist perspective, that *all* habits are bad. Kind of like an addiction that you can't get rid of, somehow. There are addictions which are actually really helpful.

[00:23:45] One addiction we have which is not helpful is... we sit down to meditate and the first thing we are interested in is... my *own* benefit. I mean, *I'm* sitting here, [laughs] using up *my* time, I should get something for it. And if I don't get something for it, for too many sessions, I start to get *un-interested* in the whole thing. And so, I also like to say... you cannot accomplish

your own benefit. It is utterly impossible. It is not just difficult. It is... you are *locked out* of it. It cannot happen. Because as soon as... we begin to *feel* like we're accomplishing our own benefit, we're sort of... inherently rewarding ourselves for having done that. When, in fact, it is not possible to genuinely accomplish our own benefit except on the shoulders of all sentient beings. And that little piece in the... teachings on bodhicitta... it's so easy to understand kind of conceptually. It's like sort of straightforward... and it feels like utter goodness. So, I would like to do it and all. But I think it's also good to note that... that is the *actual* genuine foundation... of benefit. You could say, I remember... I can't remember the teacher who said this, but it really stuck like... is it not the case that you are a sentient being? So, if you intend to accomplish all sentient beings, the benefit of... and you succeed, your benefit has fully been accomplished. Anything short of that is likely to suffer from some level of self-aggrandizement... which just blocks the path.

[00:25:51] So, I think those things are, you know... treatises have been written on all of that. But you get into it and you look for it and you learn something. But the thing that we need to get to is the place where we are not just conceptually understanding this thing. More people leave the Dharma who come into it than stay. I think Bokar Rinpoche used to talk about that also. He never said it quite like that. Because I think it was kind of a downer... [laughs] you know to say that. But I think it's true. They may come back, but more people leave than stay. Because *everybody* comes into something like meditation with the idea... *I'm* going to benefit from this. You know? I suffer from anger. I suffer from jealousy. I suffer from greed. I suffer from overeating or from over-dieting or whatever it is. And we're meditating to get past something that we mark as a cause of my suffering. And it works sometimes... a little bit. But it's not the *big* work. It's the little one. So, I think it's good if we have the intelligence, which I would say we do... have the intellect to understand it... better to go for... the big one. And if you can't make it and you only get the little one... that's still pretty good. And then you feel like... that's good! That's good. And maybe we witness ourselves... being nicer people.

[00:27:45] There was a teacher that... I had, I still have, a lot of admiration for him. He lives in Canada on the north-eastern border. And... he was a very funny guy. And one, one day I was with him in Union Square in San Francisco and we were walking around the square and he was interested in the mime. The mime was always in Union Square, San Francisco, or at least he used to be all the time. But... he was very interested because this guy was there! And he was like an institution. He would come around and he would mime things to just anybody on the street. And in fact, sometimes they had to arrest him because it was kind of confrontational with people. But... so, this teacher was fascinated by this guy. Like, what is he doing right now? I had the hardest time explaining what he was doing. It seemed obvious to everybody else, but to me, I couldn't explain to him, like, what is he doing and why would he do that? And gradually it came all the way around... and there was a teaching at the end of it. To me.

[00:29:21] I was telling him I was having a lot of trouble engaging... in practice in general. Like it had just totally dried up. I had no interest in it at all. And I think my benefit was accomplished by only being interested in being around this guy. So, for a day I was around him. And then he said... "You should have a practice that you carry with you all the time." And I said, I don't know what that would be. And he said, I can tell you. It's simple. If I say what it is, will you do it every day? And I said, yes, I will.

[00:30:01] And so, he said... *every day*, go out of your house or wherever you are, go out of your house and go into the marketplace. So, he actually said go into Safeway because there was a Safeway right nearby. So, he said, go into Safeway. And he says, you go in there and you find

somebody and you develop a relationship with them. Some*how*... you develop a relationship. And... you should really... give that person some reason to have some joy in their life on that day. And I just thought that just sounds so... kind of... nice.

[00:30:44] So, I started on that. And I remember going in the first time and kind of looking around and thinking like, what do... I do with these people? And so, I walked up to this elderly woman and I said, can you tell me where the soap is? And I remember her saying, well... do you want laundry soap or...? And oh man, I don't know. [laughter] I didn't know what to do. So, I said, I just need some hand soap. So, she said, oh, it's over there in this place. So, I went over there and I got it. And then I realized... oh, I didn't do the part where I did something to make her feel like... smile or something. And so, I went back and I said, I have to tell you... that actually, I didn't come in for soap. [laughs] I came in because I have an instruction from a spiritual teacher who said, come in and make somebody laugh. And she laughed! [laughter] This was just like, *yeah! Okay*. So, I've never missed a day since then. It's just such a great..., a great thing. And *many* things have unfolded in the process of it. Some really, really nice things.

off mic [00:32:12] Does it always have to be Safeway?

LMC [00:32:16] No. No, actually, this neighborhood is actually a great neighborhood for it. You can easily meet someone you hadn't seen before and have a conversation with somebody. One round is like more than enough. It's easy. In fact, I think like a number of people have come to *this* center by virtue of other people here going out and just meeting other people without any effort at all. So, it's actually pretty simple. I think it's simple everywhere. Once you kind of get the formula for it, it's not difficult. You just go out and say hello. One day I was walking back from lunch here on an all-day sit and there was some guy walking up and... I said hello to him and he turned around, and we had like three or four words is all and he says, Hey! Are you going to that weird church over there? And I said, Yeah. I said, I am. I'm actually coming from it, going home. And he said, I'm thinking about going there and seeing what those people do. And I said, I think that's a good idea. I think that's a good idea. You do that. And when I see you again, at some point you can report. I never saw him again. But... I'm sure he'll show up somewhere.

[00:33:58] The non-conceptual is the thing. Like, we really need to work on that. And it's not easy. Even though, we are continually *in* the non-conceptual, even if we're engaging in a *conceptual exercise*, there is an experience going on which is *not* conceptual and we don't see it. So, we're like, we're missing the juice. And it's really important, I think. Okay? ... And. ... A. N. D.

Student 2 [00:34:45] Not end. Um, so I've read, come across, a description in a number of places of a... level of meditative quiescence. And I don't feel like I personally have ever experienced that.

LMC [00:35:15] Are you sure?

Student 2 [00:35:17] No. Not anything that I would consider and I was distinctly aware... felt like... this is it. So, I'm wondering if you... would describe that as a particular event or just sort of a point on a spectrum. And is it important?

LMC [00:35:59] Do you do shamatha? Are you saying you don't have that experience in shamatha, the quiescence?

Student 2 [00:36:20] I definitely have... relative to my normal experience, a calming. But... from... descriptions that I've read of it, it sounds like the author is more talking about a very sort of distinct... level, that kind of unmistakable, like... this is it. And this is this platform from which you're then able to experience, or you know, engage in higher practices. No, I don't think I, I can't say that I've... been aware of that experience. Not really worried about it. I'm just sort of... curious about it.

LMC [00:37:23] Yeah. Worries aren't going to help, that's for sure. [laughter] ... There are many, many different teachings on the practice of shamatha, which is really meant to lead to a sense of deep quiescence. Many different teachings. And some of them are radically different from other ones. And... I think that... it's *important* that we... link up with practices that we feel are compelling. So, that when we sit down and practice, it doesn't feel like we're always needing to invoke... our discipline in order to sit down and do that. I mean... if you go to a concert and you hear somebody play beautiful music, you may go back to hear that person again. Not out of your discipline, but because the experience was compelling.

[00:38:54] So, I think when we think about the histories and the stories, the biographies of *great* practitioners... their *discipline* was probably there in the beginning. But at some point, it became something else and it was just *compelling*. It wasn't like they needed to, like, set a timeframe to sit down and do it! And there's many things that we all have in our lives that are like that. That we do them because there's something about it that draws us to do it. And the things that we do *strictly* out of discipline... are in risk of being abandoned. Which is why I said... there's more people that I know of who have entered the Dharma and left than I know who are practicing after a long time. And I think in a certain way, I feel personally responsible for that. Because... I don't practice out of discipline. I practice because... it's compelling. The alternative does not look good. [laughs]

[00:40:21] So, it's kind of like you walk in the park or you walk in an industrial factory that's filled with fumes and all sorts of things. You naturally go around it in order... to experience the benefits of that. It doesn't take any discipline. The factory stinks. And the park doesn't. And the people in the park are enjoying themselves. And you want to see the people in the park enjoying themselves. And I think the analogy is apropos. That we need to find... the method... that *sings* to us. Where we feel like... I not only *can* do this; this is what I *want* to do. I do this, because it's compelling. If we say the entire Dharma is about benefiting all sentient beings... that is a *really* stiff order. And we could get *into* it from time to time. But to actually *accomplish* those things requires something other than a-time-to-time. It requires a *consistent* application.

[00:41:41] So, I can remember in school... well, I always like to confess this because it is... because it was shocking to me... *I failed*... a class in the eighth grade. And I actually got good grades all the way through school. This was a one-off. And... I remember the teacher even calling me up... and I was like, what... fourteen or something. And they said, would you like, I'm willing to give you a 'D'. And I said, you know, I don't want a 'D'. I want to figure out why it is I can't *do* this thing. [laughs] And I just couldn't! It was a foreign language. I had *no* capability in it whatsoever. *totally* could not figure it out. And I was... *fascinated* by people who could speak more than one language. I actually never got good at it... ever. English seems okay, but give me anything else... and it's like whoa! This is like the maximum effort with the least return. So, of course, I never went to study deeply other things. Living in India for a few years, kind of pick it up. Good enough to have an argument with somebody. [laughter]

[00:43:17] But... I think in a certain way, the Dharma is like that, too. ... We do things consistently and regularly that we *feel* a strong connection with and that we feel personal benefit from. ... Even though, I think it's clear, it's true... that we cannot accomplish our own benefit. Kind of single handedly, it is... almost logically impossible. Because... anyone who wouldn't say that our benefit includes profoundly positive relationships with other sentient beings hasn't figured out what the benefit is. [laughs] And so, it just cannot be done! And I think... that is primarily what the entire mahayana path is about, is to discover that and see that, through the practice... of holding the *aspiration* at least, to benefit *all* sentient beings... and especially those I like the least... therein lies the fruit. And once you've figured *that* out, then you want to go out and meet everybody in the Safeway. [laughter] Because *those* are the people who hold the trick. ... So, I don't know why we got lost there somewhere, it sounded like.

[00:45:11] It should not be difficult for us to understand that... if I can rest my awareness on this clock, as just an inanimate object in front of me and practice zhiñay with that... then I should be able to accomplish zhiñay. Except for *one big thing*. And that is that... it has many names, but I'll just stick to... the nature of mind itself... is not limited... to generating the experience of stillness. [laughs] So, you get up in the morning and wake up and... sit on your pillow, on your bed, which is usually what I do in the morning, the first thing, and... you expect that this is going to be a nice, peaceful meditation. You have set yourself up... because you have no idea what's coming. And zhiñay, at its deepest place, does not rely upon a still mind. Because the still mind cannot be relied upon.

[00:46:42] So... a practice that relies upon *anything* in particular about the mind being stable... nobody would ever realize anything. We have to be ready for it when it comes. Because the mind generates experiences continuously. And we add onto it, and I've got to say, whether you... have a relationship with this or not... it is far better and far more profound and *far* more interesting... to hold the view that whether I am dead or alive, the mind continually generates experiences. I don't get to choose what they are.

[00:47:31] But there is another truth which is worth also pondering about it, because we often talk about karma. I think we shouldn't talk about karma, actually. In fact, the Buddha himself said, don't talk about karma, you know. [laughs] Because... as Westerner's we have this curiosity about like, I want to understand it. So, the Buddha, there's many cases where he said, "You can never understand karma until you are *completely* enlightened." Not just kind of along the way nicely, but you *cannot* understand it. But there is one thing we can understand. And that is... unbounded, profound interconnectedness. Which is fundamentally, you could say there is... the meaning of karma... in a nutshell.

[00:48:22] This morning, I had a negative thought about somebody and let's say... I just saw it. I put my awareness on it. It was gone. I never paid any more attention to it. ... That's okay. You cannot avoid negative thoughts. But can you avoid *acting* on them, encouraging them and all that? You can avoid that, too! So, what we can do is... understanding... interconnectedness, we really mean like when we say dead or alive, it means like no *boundary* on it. There's no place where... the truth of interdependence does not exist. There is no... beginning point to interconnectedness. It has no beginning. It has no end. Understanding *that*... you can relate... to the unbounded, sometimes absolutely maddening, wild experiences that... arise out of the nature of mind itself. The Tibetans generally call this, it's the activity of the Dharmakaya.

[00:49:53] So, the Dharmakaya is often referred to as the great emptiness. It's also the source of all experiences because it's synonymous. You could put an equal sign between Dharmakaya

and nature of mind. That's where the experiences come from. And interdependence determines what the experiences are... *over the long run*. What you thought and said and did... are what you have set up, what you have planted in your garden. And the more you have done it, the more it became fertilized and grew really ripe. And if it was filled with... loving kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity... you get one result. And if it's filled with hatred and racism and all the rest of this stuff, you get that result. And if you don't get it today or in this life, you get it in the future. The problem is that when you get it in the future, you have absolutely no idea where it came from. [laughs]

[00:51:03] So... the smart Buddhist... plants the right seeds. And therein lies the whole system of morality. It's just like... plant the right seeds. Teach people how to plant the right seeds. And the rest will take care of itself. You don't need to worry about it. You'll still have the stuff coming down from previous lives. From things you did in this life... not so good, [laughs] and so on. But at least you can see those things. You can connect those things. But you have to get good at doing it, whether you connect to it or not. And just have that sense of... I have no idea what I did in a previous life. How am I supposed to know that? Buddhism is not a system of punishment. So, there's no hell... which is waiting for someone to arrive at. Which is pretty much the Christian hell. You know, it's like your bed is made and you go in and there's your bed. Go to sleep. The Buddhist hell, and Buddhists have a hell too, but it... has a different aspect to it. The Buddhist hell... does not exist. ... So, you have to think about that for about five years. The Buddhist hell does not exist. It arises when the occupant arises.

[00:52:49] Nobody made the hell realm. It's not a system of punishment. You don't get punished for it. I recall, Kalu Rinpoche was asked once... if you're a thief and you rob banks and you steal things all the time... do people rob things from you, in your future lives? And it's kind of like a punishment thing, you know, it's like getting even somehow. Kalu Rinpoche laughed and he said, no, actually, you become a more proficient bandit. And I remembered we laughed, we laughed like crazy over it until we saw that he wasn't laughing... [laughs] actually. You just plant more seeds and... suffer the consequences from your own side. No one else is responsible for the judgment. It plays out on its own. So, all of the experiences that continually come down all the time... are just those things. The manifestation of the seeds that we planted... since time without beginning. That's a fundamental, philosophical underpinning of the thing. So, it has a kind of upside and a downside. [laughs] Okay? ... Are we finished? Say yes. [laughs] [In a kids voice,] Are we going to go home? Yes.

Student 3 [00:56:30] I have one last question. It seems like the consequences of karma, of repetition, they play out in the relative. Correct?

LMC [00:56:42] Karma is a relative truth. That's right. It doesn't actually exist. ... That it? [laughs] All right, let's... dedicate.

[00:57:13] *dedicating the merit*