

2018_11_25_pm2_QA_LMC.mp4

*find and consistently engage in a practice that inspires you and you'll discover the entire path, ways to practice bodhicitta, **Carrying Practice**: feeling compassion for self & extending its fruit to others, questioning if teaching is authentic if teacher did misdeeds, critical to have interest and confidence in our practice, **Carrying Practice**: habituating the aspiration to benefit others every time we speak, recognize but not act on negative feelings, developing confidence in aspirations*

LMC [00:01:52] So, if there's some lingering question that needs clarification, now's a good time to ask. Or some topic that you're interested in exploring shortly.

Student 1 [00:02:20] I have a question. It's a personal practice question... and see if you're comfortable in sharing. Question around our own human illnesses or health issues as we continue to age... and as we lose capacity and change in how we know ourself. What, for your own self personally, what Dharma and life tools have you used to help you turn... perhaps the illnesses you may have experienced or changes in your physical, mental or emotional capacities... how do you turn all of this into your own Dharma practice... to work with, you know, the emotions that come up, the physical's... feelings that come up, all of that? So that's, uh... and does this make sense?

LMC [00:03:17] It's a big order. [laughs]

Student 1 [00:03:20] Because I notice my earth suit is, has... over this last several years, changed more in my life than it has over many, many, many, many years. And it was kind of a shock. It was like 'holy petunias!' And so, I thought I'd ask you as a very dear and honest and skilled practitioner and teacher, you know, how do you deal with the unpleasant things that our human experience brings into your life?

LMC [00:03:58] Well... sometimes we make it too complicated. And... sometimes we maybe misunderstand the... proposition that Kalu Rinpoche gave a few times way back in the early 70s... when I still thought things were simple. [laughter] And so, it took a while to understand... a statement that he made that later... became really important personally. And I think it's a proposal that, that might be helpful. He was giving some teachings on Chenrezig and a few other things, which I now cannot recall the details of. But... the thing that *struck* me was that at a certain point, he said, that the entire Dharma... and he gave some examples of what he meant by *entire Dharma*, which was, you know, kind of like... the congressional library in its breadth, just like really extreme. Disappointing... in the sense that there's no hope that, that I could ever... master that. But then he went on to say, the antidote to all of that was that... the entire Dharma, all the teachings of the Buddha, are contained in every teaching the Buddha gave. And that also didn't sink in right away. But... it sounded good!

[00:06:31] And later on, then we asked some questions and he said, if you can find... in all of the Dharma... a teaching... which is helpful to you... and that you consistently engage in that practice, that over time... the entire Dharma will be *revealed* by that very thing that you recall every day, that you practice every day. In other words, it wasn't like just you could... find it, like it was some big precious diamond that you could just turn in at the bank somehow. You had to *engage* and continue to work with that thing that you had discovered. But he gave some examples, none of which precisely I can remember. But he gave some examples of things that

were really quite simple. And I think we have lots of examples that he might have said, though I can't remember exactly which ones he used. But I think they were things, for example, like... when we practice, practice for the benefit of others. If that particular piece sings to you... and it's helpful for you, and when you wake up in the morning and you don't feel good, you don't feel like getting out of bed on that day... you recall... I'm going to get out of bed *for others*, not for myself. Then you're engaging in that practice.

[00:08:15] So, he wasn't saying specifically do anything like that. It was more like... you find something... that inspires you, that works for you... and you can discover the entire path through that one thing. So, I suspect that... there was much more to it than what he said. But I also think there's a certain way in which... that's just actually what he meant. Was that you didn't *need* to actually learn that much, but you needed to *consistently* engage in the practice of it, whatever it was.

Student 1 [00:08:59] So, that would be your field of practice then. Calling to mind something for me that is extremely meaningful. Also having validated the truth of the Dharma for me, looking at suffering, suffering in my life, where it comes from, the truth of it, of sickness, aging and death. But also, like I am not alone in experiencing that. It's universal. Absolutely every human being... experiences that exact same thing. So, if I really can feel connected with, as you mentioned, deep compassion for others because I'm aware, hey, they're going through the same thing I am. And actually, in this last season, I've needed many health professionals to help me through my journey. Without their help and guidance and love and support and kindness... I wouldn't be here. Or if I were, I'd be in a lot, lot more pain and distress than I'm currently experiencing. So, it really validated my connection with other people. And it really showed me the truth of the Dharma. So, I guess that's one of the pieces I can remind myself.

LMC [00:10:09] I think that's it. That's it! So, as long as I've known you... you have always been... focused on the benefit of others. And of course, that's a *big* piece of the entire buddhadharma is like the, focus on the benefit of others. We naturally when we sit down to meditate, there is a natural inclination that we have... that might be something like, I hope that my mind is still. I hope that the anger I had yesterday with so-and-so is gone today or something. In other words, we're looking for our own benefit... *in* the practice itself. And... it might be that we make a discovery by focusing on the benefit of others. When we engage in the practice... we just think about the *wish* that whatever realization I might come to, that it would become helpful for others. It's simple. You already know this. So many times we've talked about it. You and I and others like yourself. You already know this. You focus on that and you're kind of in the stream... that you need to be in.

Student 1 [00:11:40] This is just sort of like a pop quiz. Have I really learned this and do I know it? And everything I've ever been through has been used by life's mystery to be of service to other people who have been through the same thing or will go through the same thing. So, I guess just to remind myself of that and also remind me to be compassionate to myself. Sometimes I lose perspective or, you know, I get a discouraged mind.

LMC [00:12:13] Yeah. And even when you remind yourself of being compassionate for yourself, you also can turn that into the next step. Which is while I have compassion for myself, may the fruit of that compassion ripen in others. So, not so difficult... to maintain what you have always been good at doing. So, why go look for something new? You know, you have the means in you... and it's profound.

[00:12:47] Every great teacher we've ever heard speak... will talk about the importance of aspiration bodhicitta. Which is the wish that I will accomplish the Dharma. And the degree to which I accomplish it will be for the benefit of others. And I'll continue... and it will just kind of roll out like that. And the benefit of that... also *accrues* beyond the boundaries of this life. Which is the other piece which is so important. Sometimes we grieve that we have not lived long enough. So many people I know will say, I wish I had encountered the Dharma when I was younger. And it's, it's... I think, helpful to say... you did. Because if you hadn't, we wouldn't be here. So, just hold that view that things are not bounded into little boxes and sections and doses of things. In fact, what we experience is the result of everything that we have already experienced, thought, done, said. It just rolls forward like that. It's easy to be confident in that. And confidence is also really helpful with it. So, that when you, you make positive wishes for the benefit of others... you understand that having made that wish... *itself*... is actually beneficial for others.

Student 1 [00:14:24] Thank you. And I assume you do that for yourself as well too. Follow these same kinds of things.

LMC [00:14:33] No, I don't do those things. [laughter] I rely on you to do them for me.

Student 2 [00:14:58] I actually have a question. Someone asked *me* a question recently and I said, "You know, I do not know the answer to this, and it's a good question. So, I'm going to try to remember to ask my teachers." Someone who... has just been practicing for a little while and wants to start reading more Dharma teachings and told me that she felt overwhelmed by like so many different Dharma writers. And I said, well, you know, it can be sometimes helpful to start out with, you know, contemporary living Western ones, you know, to kind of get in and get into the field. And she said, you know, these books by Ken McLeod and Noah Levine look good, but I know that now, you know, they've been, you know, accused of sexual misconduct. And should I... not... should I avoid those books? Even though those are the ones that are kind of catching my eye when I'm looking through the writings and thinking of things to read. And I said, you know, I don't actually know... the answer to that because I do know that those people have been people that I read in the past. And that were regarded as, you know, respected contemporary Dharma teachers. And now they are, you know... in some hot water during the Me-Too Movement. And so... I didn't know what to say. I didn't know if you have thoughts on... do we... kind of set some of those writers aside now and no longer really recommend those or... I just didn't know, so, I thought I would ask.

LMC [00:16:39] I get the issue. ... Sometimes we... hold ourselves... to a standard that we cannot live up to. I'm talking about you and me and other people... just ordinary people. We tend to do that. And sometimes it has a huge impact on our lives and other times it doesn't. But I think that... you can find a large number of teachers who have made mistakes, big and small. Some of them have been renowned teachers. Others have been... kind of unknown. But my sense is, if you understand the Dharma... enough... rely upon what you understand. ... So, there are people that I don't tend to read because I know things about them. And in a certain way that's a problem. Because they may actually have... penned some excellent teachings. And I'm skipping past them because of something I know about them. Which has *nothing* to do... with whether or not the Dharma I am reading is authentic. So, I don't think that there is a black and white answer to this. I think we need to investigate *all* the things that we read. Take a good look at the teachers that we study with... and ask questions like, is this somebody that I can rely upon or that I should rely upon?

[00:19:01] One of the... most important things in our practice of the Dharma is confidence. It's *really* important. In fact, a couple of teachers... who I have admired greatly and still do, have said, if you don't have confidence, your Dharma will fail. You will not succeed. So, I think that's true in my own experience. If I don't have confidence, I begin to leak... around the edges, in the sense of... losing my ability to even be *interested* in the practices. So, it's critical of course. You won't do anything if you're not interested in it. So, the interest seems to be like, the *first* thing is that. But then when you actually engage in the practice, it's really important to gain a level of confidence... that you can *build* upon. Because the more confidence you have, of course it's got to be like authentic, you can't just make it up, but... the more confidence that you have, the more *effective* your practice becomes.

[00:20:24] In some, in some ways, you have to kind of go through... the search... that you mentioned earlier, to find the thing that *sings* to you. And sometimes it's helpful to... share your concerns and share your insights with what you've read with others who you might trust. Like, what do you think about this? What do you know about this person, for example? Like if you tell me this person's okay, maybe I'll read this a little easier somehow. Because there's been many things that have been written by people whose *lives* are not necessarily exemplary. But there erudition of the Dharma sometimes is... actually excellent.

[00:21:17] So, not to excuse... the problems that someone may have created for themselves and others. But more important is to find an authentic spiritual path and engage in it. So, whatever it takes... to do that, pretty much... it's worth it. And if you feel like, I really can't quite read this book because when I read about this person, then put that aside. Put it aside with... *no* judgment, if you can, about the person who wrote it. It's kind of like, you know, you could even make the wish that someone who picks that book up will actually be inspired by it. Because there's a lot of books written by... people who you would not want to emulate... for their lifestyle... and yet... what they have written or what they have taught is actually profoundly helpful. And *unfortunately*, many of us, myself included, have found ourselves not able to engage in those practices because we knew who wrote it. That's unfortunate. And that's part of *our* work that we need to do. That is, if the teachings are *helpful*, then they are worth taking a look at. No matter who wrote it.

[00:22:51] So, you can't get the confidence that you need, if the person who wrote it is really somebody who you feel is really bad. It's almost impossible to get the confidence. But not all teachings are written by people who are... really highly realized... beings. Many of them are written by people who are not... so exalted. And yet, you open up the book and you may find in there, something which is *extremely* helpful. So, you wouldn't want to throw that away... just because... the person who wrote it maybe has a bad reputation. And there's a lot of those these days. Quite a few who have... we can say kind of fallen... by virtue of their activities and relationships with others. And yet... the same person wrote texts that we sit down and study and we're inspired by them... *before* we find out what this person did. So, it's an interesting example where... it *still* is the case that the teachings that were written down are helpful. And if you can put aside who wrote it... and just be grateful that somebody penned that and that it works for you... that's one possibility. But if you can't, then you just kind of move on.

[00:24:23] The problem, of course is... the person who's been the great example... then you sit down and you practice using those teachings. And later on, down the road, they do some things which are not... so good. So, this actually is the fault of those teachers. So, what we say is, the teacher is responsible for that. Even if you give authentic teachings and then you engage in activities which are not in accordance with the Dharma... and the result is, is that people no

longer can practice those teachings... because of that, that's a problem for the teacher... also. So, good to keep that in mind. They have a responsibility to live up to a certain standard. So that people will actually be drawn to and engage in the practices. But there's nothing you can do if they don't do it. But continue to look at the teachings... from the perspective of... maybe I can't study and do these things, but... I hope somebody can and benefits by it. ... We always wish that all of our teachers would match a standard that is beyond our own... currently. [laughs] And that they would *stick* to that... or *excel* in that so that we would be inspired to continue to follow that. It's not... always so straightforward.

Student 2 [00:26:07] Thanks.

Student 3 [00:31:15] So, I'm thinking about confidence. If I truly had confidence that... a wish for someone would help them... I'd probably be wishing all day... and I'm not. And so, I'm wondering how to... increase confidence. I was reading the other day something in Padmasambhava's book about when you make a wish for someone... it really does help them. And I thought, [laughs] I don't have that... confidence. I'd like to. My Western mind says if it's true, I would like to have that confidence. That's a preface to my question. The first part is, when we say 'unborn awareness' or 'nature of mind' or 'dharmakaya', are we pointing at the same thing?

LMC [00:32:22] Pretty much. Good enough.

Student 3 [00:32:26] Okay, so this morning, I think I heard you say that the Dharmakaya doesn't have any agenda.

LMC [00:32:39] No agenda. [laughs] Yeah. Not that we know of. [laughter]

Student 3 [00:32:47] What do I know. So, it seems like we have an agenda... to be able to help... all sentient beings... to achieve, you know, liberation for the sake of all sentient beings. And that seems like a really big agenda. The... the hope, the wish... the intention... if possible, to do that. That's a big agenda.

LMC [00:33:25] I would say, I'm not sure how you would characterize it in terms of big.

Student 3 [00:33:34] *Huge*.

LMC [00:33:37] Okay, I get it. [laughs] Yeah. Okay. Say that again. What is the agenda there? What is that?

Student 3 [00:33:47] To benefit all sentient beings.

LMC [00:33:49] Okay, that's good enough. Thanks. I can do that. [laughter]

Student 3 [00:33:53] I don't follow you.

LMC [00:34:00] No, you can do it, too! Because all you need to do is make that aspiration. And of course, to make the aspiration once... gives you something. But it's kind of like... it's just like water's dripping out of the faucet. It's not really running out yet. But if you make that aspiration... let's go to the other extreme. Let's say that you have developed *the habit*... Buddhists aren't supposed to have habits, I think, but... but actually, a lot of the things we do... are focused on... developing habits. So, you could say, that if every time that I am about to speak, the first thing

that... let's imagine that you have practiced this and you have this kind of as a habit. The habit is that every time you're about to speak, the first thing you do before you speak is... you hold the aspiration that what I'm about to say is *nothing but helpful for all beings*. And that was your *total* practice in this life.

[00:35:20] How many times do we speak in a day? And how much effect does it have... to hold the wish that what I'm about to say, which I don't even know what it is yet... but whatever it is, I hope that it benefits all sentient beings without a single exception. That *affects* our mind. So, we affect our own minds... by planting the seed of the wish that whatever I'm about to say or do or think... that it will benefit *all* sentient beings. And... of course, if we try to test the water to see whether it worked... after having done it once, we will find nothing... usually. But if you do it over and over and over and over, day after day after day, year after year after year after year... *you can see* the difference. Because when you preface everything... I'm about to say something and I preface it with... my only wish is that it will be beneficial for all beings. As opposed to all the other prefaces we use like, well, I hope this takes care of that person somehow or that it manages to get me something that I haven't been able to get yet. All the things that we... *feed* our minds... is the result is what we *think* and experience on a daily basis.

[00:37:13] So, to just have... a kindly thought about *all* sentient beings... every time we open our mouths, we'll unquestionably have an enormous impact... on our mental states and our minds. It can't not happen! Because we do it all the time anyway, all we're talking about is changing... the modality of it and approaching it from a little different direction. And my guess is for most of us, we don't have to do it for *very* long before we feel... *personal* benefit from making that wish. Having felt the personal benefit from it, we then might have a certain sense of, well, wait a minute here, I'm making this wish for *others*. And yet I'm... gaining some kind of benefit. So, then you have to add onto that... the benefit that I received by saying this, may it become the benefit for all sentient beings.

[00:38:16] So, we just start folding it into itself. It gets larger and larger, like you said. It is not a martyr tradition, which most of us know. This is not to lose all the benefit that we have had by wishing that others benefit from what I do think and say. Instead, the benefit overall grows and grows and grows. We witness it in our own mind stream and we can witness it in others, too. When we meet others and we speak with them and have a relationship of some kind, we can see... that we begin to have some confidence... in the methodology. It's a *simple* method. Not so simple when we're trying to do it with *all* beings. And there's a tendency from time to time to think... it's easy for me to do this with all beings. But I don't know about this person. And... there's nothing wrong with that. So, that's important that we don't beat ourselves up for things because it's ordinary to have negative feelings about each other. That's just common. The issue isn't whether or not we ever have negative feelings... but what do we do about them? What do we do *with* them when we recognize I think is the big thing. Do we use them against others? Do we use them against ourselves? ... Anyway, I think that answers the question of confidence. I don't know about the rest of it.

Student 3 [00:40:01] I have confidence in what you've laid out... that the practices... change... the mindstream. The wish for others really has this effect. And the long game is a really long game. I have confidence in a *really* long game, you know. But the confidence that... when I have a wish for someone, it benefits them. The *wish*, not the speech or the relationship or even being with them, but the wish for them, say a family member across the country. *That's* harder for me to have confidence in. But I'm trying to work that out. And so my question is, if the Dharmakaya has no agenda... and we kind of have an agenda... when that motivation... that pure motivation,

meets with, you know, the dharmakaya... is that where the potential is? The potential that a wish... I'm wondering and I've got this... it's too complicated, I know, but is there... wisdom and skillful means coming together in that... in a way that, we can have some confidence in?

LMC [00:41:41] Well, first of all, I would back-burner the dharmakaya. Only because... what we're trying to do here is, I think, is understand what we're doing *enough*... so that we can have the *experience* of what we're doing. And have some confidence in the method that we're using. And yeah, we can talk about the dharmakaya and various things about that, that may or may not be inspiring, but on the whole, for people... maybe the conversation needs to be moved somewhere else. It's a little esoteric and maybe not so helpful in the way that we're just trying to get at this thing. What you do... with your body, your speech and your mind will affect what you experience... forward from that place... whatever you did.

[00:42:40] It's, it's really just another way of saying... interdependence is complete. It's not like *some* things are interdependent and other things aren't. That... they're *all* interdependent. And the result of that is... you can be *sure* that what you fill your mind with... will bear the fruit that comes from filling the mind with that thing, whatever it is. So, a lot of the practices, maybe you could say all the practices, are designed for us to... *engage* in body, speech and mind. That is to say what we do with our bodies and our speech and our minds... that is designed so that what we *do* with those things, if we follow the instructions for it, try to develop the habit of putting our attention on the benefit of others, for example... the benefit from that will return. And it will return, *especially* when we *really* put the emphasis on the benefit of others.

[00:43:53] So, we do trick ourselves from time to time in the manner of perhaps quietly asking, well, what about me? [laughs] ... We have sometimes talked about the... I want to call it a proposition, that... we rely upon the benefit of others and holding the *wish* of the benefit of others in order to accomplish our own benefit. Like, we really *can't* intentionally accomplish our own benefit in a spiritual sense, because as soon as we make the aspiration to accomplish our own benefit, we're compromising the very thing we're wishing for. So, it's important to hold the wish with no regard for what comes back to us. And of course, that's tricky. We want to hold the wish with no regard for what we might get from it. But if we watch closely while we're doing that, we'll often see that we're secretly holding the wish, or at least hopefully secretly, but not really secretly enough, that we actually are going to get significant benefit from it. And the benefit may be in proportion to... how little we expect from it and how big we wish that others will benefit.

Student 4 [00:45:47] Help me with what you just said, because basically that puts me in a downspin. And it's because... if I really take your words, that every thought, action and what's the other thing? thought, action and speech... has that affect, then I don't want to do anything because I'm really scared. And that's what it does to me. It doesn't make me confident.

LMC [00:46:23] But are there things... that you do... that have no consequence?

Student 4 [00:46:47] I mean for me to say, okay, I'm going to keep, I'm always, I mean, don't you understand, though, how it makes me feel like... if I'm going to do this *only* for other people's benefit. And I right now, I can sink into *such* a hard place. And it is so dark! And that's just what's happening. And so, I'm not... so, then I hear what you're saying, it's like, okay, I'm not doing very good and I'm really being really even more of a shit than I think!

LMC [00:47:26] There's nothing wrong with taking care of yourself. There is no judgment on taking care of ourselves and doing what it is that we need to do. So, are you hearing that there is a judgment there or what?

Student 4 [00:47:46] Now, it's not so much I'm hearing that there's a judgment, I'm just hearing... well, maybe that is what I'm doing. Because I just know right now I lack... so much confidence. And I know that what happens though, when I'm hearing what you're sharing... and it's like, and I know part of it is... I'm just experiencing it *too* black and white in this way. And I know that. But I *know* that's what... that can really... I can really just take me there. ...] You know, I can't even tell you. Michael, what am I saying? [laughs] I don't know where that was coming from. Umm.

LMC [00:49:04] When I say, it's an unusual person who... can, at *all* times... hold the wish that whatever I'm thinking or doing or saying will benefit others. That's a *very* unusual person. So, when we talk about those things, I think we need to understand that... [what] we are trying to do... is lift ourselves up into a different state. And there's no penalty, particularly, if we can't *do* that for whatever the reason is. It's more an issue of... if you *can* do more of that, you may find that it's helpful.

[00:49:52] On the other hand, because we are not in control of the way that all of the... causes and conditions and things that we live in... we're not in control of all of those things. So, we may find... and I can speak from my own experience and I've known many people who have, who have said... when I engage in certain Dharma practices, I feel depressed... from it. I have felt that. In fact, I have abandoned practices in the past for periods of time. Because it just felt... untenable somehow. Just doesn't work for me. But that doesn't mean that I lose ground or that I can't, at any moment, begin another practice in a different direction and engage in things which are helpful. So, there's no contradiction between that. My guess is you could ask, you know, pick any of the three greatest beings that you know who are alive and go and ask them. And I suspect that every one of them will say, whoa, I've been in really dark places! I just believe that because I have heard it from a few people who... were surprising.

[00:51:21] I think that the difference is, is that it's helpful to be encouraged... in a direction which... we have some confidence that that direction will be helpful. But the truth also is, we can't always get up with a smile on our face every morning. It just doesn't work. And if it does, it hurts even more when we can't really do it, and we just try to look like we do it. So, it's really a progressive thing. It's not like this is a formula that if you recite this formula, you will have a positive experience. It doesn't always work that way. You and I both know that. ... So, we sit here and we try to encourage each other. And even the encouragement doesn't always work. So, you know, I could take you out and get you an ice cream cone. And that might actually work better. [laughter] So, I think the truth is, is that the Dharma is many things. It is not a single thing. And... it's often easy to wish positive things for others. And there's times when... we can barely stand ourselves to get up and move. It's helpful to have good friends. Whether they know the Dharma or not, you know. ... Okay?

sangha [00:53:42] *dedicating the merit*