

## 2019\_03\_31\_am1\_Shamatha\_LMC.mp4

### *Carrying Practice: habituating the bodhicitta aspiration*

[00:05:28] In the beginning... when we encounter the Dharma and the teachings... it's common... appropriately... that we are *excited* about... the many teachings and the connections with teachers and members of the sangha. And we have a deep... positive desire to... accomplish the Dharma. And each of us... approach the Dharma... in different ways. We are each magnetized by different things. ... Some find themselves magnetized by... the idea of... compassion, for example. Magnetized by the idea... of bringing benefit to one's self. Which often is *immediately* apparent in some *clear* way. ... And so, we exert ourselves and we work... to accomplish... our own benefit, first. And then... we also hear the teachings... on the *importance* of working for the benefit of others. And working for the benefit of others also seems... like a magnetic principle. That we would be able to accomplish both our *own* benefit... and the benefit of others... is a *compelling* proposition.

[00:09:08] Inevitably, like any profound... and often difficult adventure... we find it not so easy... to accomplish our own benefit and the benefit of others. And so, we often land on the... straightforward, *obvious*... point of focusing primarily on our own benefit. Because after all... how can we accomplish the benefit of others without having accomplished our own benefit? How would we *know*... how to accomplish the benefit of others... if we have *not* known how to accomplish our own benefit?

[00:10:31] And so, for some time... somewhat humorously... we work for our own benefit... for years or decades... gradually discovering that it is *not* bearing the fruit that we thought we had been promised. So, I want to say honestly that... in that time of disappointment... it is a time when people... leave the path. ... In some *odd* sense, it *makes* sense. If what you thought it was... turns out not to be, then one could say... smart people would leave. But like many things that we begin... and we hold an *assumption* about where we will progress and what will happen, what will unfold... when it doesn't turn out that way... we try something else.

[00:12:36] And coming into the Dharma... practicing the path of the Buddha, it is in that sense no different. ... In one way, the Dharma is much easier to practice. We *do* get some benefit... by sitting quietly on a regular basis, if nothing else. For many of us, that's pretty good. But to go *deeply* into it requires... encountering and working with... the actual *causes* of our disappointment, the actual causes of our suffering... and there lies great trouble. Nothing new here. This is what we do as human beings.

[00:14:18] It's not so difficult to hold the *wish*... that not a single human being or sentient being of any kind... would suffer or deserve to suffer. In the context of our Dharma, we can say this with absolute certainty. The best wish to hold in our minds, at *all* times is that... not a *single* being, no matter what they have done, plan to do, did... they do not deserve to suffer. So, we hold this wish... and we hold that wish for ourselves, of course! But it is... not always easy to see the fruit. The *challenge* is difficult. And in an organization like KCC or any other... worthwhile... spiritual organization... we naturally experience *all* of the issues... that we experienced in our careers, in our interpersonal relationships, in our spiritual path. ... Because... we have not yet transcended... the causes of those sufferings.

[00:16:55] So, as we have mentioned before... what is critical... is that we... practice *a lot*. And in that practice, we give rise to our... joy with each other... our compassion, our companionship. ... Even when *it's thin*. Even when we'd rather do something else. But in order for the fruit to really... grow ripe... the best method is to *stick* to the aspiration... by all the means that are available to us in this tradition, to *stick* to the aspiration... that every thought that we have and everything that we do will accomplish the benefit of *others*. ... Forget about your own benefit. Whatever benefit we have accomplished... came from and continues to come from... our wishes for the benefit of others... and the things that we do in *that*... direction.

[00:19:07] Every practice that I know of, which is *not* all of them by any means, but I do not know of a single practice or a single teaching that says... focus on your own benefit. I have never heard such a thing. So, as we begin this morning... in resting your mind in the state of shamatha... stillness... return *many* times to renew... the underpinnings of the path, which is... fundamentally... I practice this in order to benefit all sentient beings. Period. ... Not so much to exclude oneself. ... But to put oneself in the place of *all* beings and practice in that way. Every *great* teacher that we have admired and followed... has taught that the benefit comes... from focusing on the benefit of others. Always. So, whatever practice we do... come back to that 100 times a day. ... So, we will begin by... going for refuge in the Buddha. And then we'll spend some time practicing shamatha.

**sangha** [00:21:33] reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer  
[00:23:13] period of meditation  
**sangha** [00:48:10] dedicating the merit