

## 2018\_02\_25\_pm2\_QA\_LMC.mp4

each teaching of Dharma contains all the teachings, **Carrying Practice**: taking all as gift from the guru 24/7, devotion to guru is key

**LMC** [00:00:27] Maybe you'd like *us* to ask *you* questions. [laughter]

**Student 1** [00:01:12] I thought [a student's] question this morning was very interesting... and all the discussion around the stages of discouraging one's obscurations, or getting rid of them, six at a time. I've never heard any of those teachings before. But what I thought was interesting, or what I'm having a question about is...as one eliminated the particular obscurations, the first six, the second six and the third six... would, would you experience that?! How would one experience that and know whether one had gotten past the *particular* obscuration that one had been working on? I didn't know I had eighteen, but now I'm fully acquainted with that.

**Bill** [00:02:01] There was only 16. [laughter]

**Student 1** [00:02:04] Well, he just mentioned the last six. So I thought there were 18. But okay, I stand corrected. Sixteen.

**LMC** [00:02:32] Do you have a connection with those things. Bill?

**Bill** [00:02:44] No. [laughter]

**LMC** [00:02:54] That's how deep our obscurations are. We can't even see it.

**LMC** [00:05:34] In various... times, hearing teachings from different teachers, one of my favorites has always been that... every teaching of the Dharma contains the entire path and all of the remedies and things. And of course, we don't see that... but sometimes it's helpful to... look at that while you're engaged in your practice. That in some way it contains all of the things, like whatever it is that you're doing, no matter how small or how big it is. And other times I think we just are capable of being very *facile*... with the pieces of the teaching... and that we can see all of them... and practice all of them and see how they work together. But to see *all* of the iterations, *all* of the time... seems nearly impossible and not particularly helpful. ... So we each have certain proclivities. You can say, well, we saw Suvansh's proclivity today, but was it his proclivity tomorrow? Maybe something different. He may make some discovery in all those things and then... come back with something that is helpful for everybody or not.

**Student 1** [00:07:11] You still didn't answer the basic question.

**LMC** [00:07:12] Which was?

**Student 1** [00:07:16] Will just go with five, because I can recognize five in my stream of being. If one managed to bring a significant... recognition to one or two of the obscurations, and one felt that one stream of being wasn't maybe rid of it completely, but... reduced. Would you experience... something different from your basic self? *That's* the question. And *what* would you experience? Would it be any closer to enlightenment?

**LMC** [00:07:58] I can't answer because I think that's a personal experience. So... you'd have to probably answer that yourself. I'm not sure if somebody else's answer... wouldn't necessarily be that helpful, but... What do you find in it that's helpful?

**Student 1** [00:08:29] Well... I keep wondering if perhaps I should, pay attention to... perhaps another obscuration. Like I did in the beginning of my practice. I remember Kalu Rinpoche saying, and Bill mentioned it... the last time he taught... *heap* all your practice on your obscurations. And I never forgot that because I'm sort of a 'carrying practice' type of person. So, I'm always looking at my mind and seeing my own reactivity or *trying* to see what's going on with... me. But... would I deliberately pick another practice if I thought, that I had not necessarily achieved the whole thing of one obscuration... but if I had made a significant dent in it and was no longer my major, obscuration. Should I move onto another one? And how do I pick and choose?

**LMC** [00:09:34] Well, it's a good question. There are so many ways that you can approach... these obscurations and... there's so much *said* about them, and especially you recall all things that Kalu Rinpoche used to say about the obscurations and how important it was to work with them, in some way. But the *means* by which one works with them... whether you follow a specific kind of formula... to work with them or whether you work with them, kind of as you feel inspired to do it.

**Student 1** [00:10:17] How about as they arise?

**LMC** [00:10:19] Well, that's the best of all!

**Student 1** [00:10:20] Yeah.

**LMC** [00:10:21] That's the best of all. But... when someone you'd never known before, you just met, slapped you in the face really hard... it's a *little* difficult in that moment to work with... the klesha on the spot. So you might have to slap them back first. [laughter] Just kidding.

**Student 1** [00:10:39] I would try to remember... who was it who slapped his student on the cheek with a shoe? Who did that?

**Bill** [00:10:51] Tilopa.

**Student 1** [00:10:51] Tilopa. Okay. So... anyhow, I don't think I'd slap Tilopa back.

**LMC** [00:11:00] Well, I'd say you might have found your match at that point. Maybe that would be joyful. [laughter]

**Student 1** [00:11:08] And maybe I'd have a complete dispellment of that obscuration if he did that.

**LMC** [00:11:16] I think it's interesting... when you work on these obstacles for a long time. I think what we routinely find... is that there's periods when... there doesn't seem to be any progress. And then sometimes the progress seems to occur without any effort at all. And so then we might decide, like... great, it doesn't need any effort! And then nothing happens for a while. It's like, back and forth. And I'm not sure that it makes a *lot* of difference... which of the various methods that you use... as I keep having the toothbrush analogy, because I remember once about ten

years ago, I asked the dentist which toothbrush should I use? And she said, "The one you *use* is the one to use." And at that very time, that was a really good... piece of advice.

[00:12:16] I think that in a way, you could say that about... lots of the Dharma practices, too. If you're under the guidance of... a teacher that you feel *deeply* connected to... and they're helping you and you feel like you're getting something from, or getting *a lot* from it... if that person says, do X, Y or Z, of course you're completely inclined to do that. And because that person *said* to do it, you also have a certain level of... confidence that's sort of thrown in, free of charge. You didn't have to work for it, because of your connection there. And so that, that can be helpful.

**LMC** [00:12:57] But... let's say that person dies...

**Student 1** [00:13:02] They did.

**LMC** [00:13:02] And you still have the connection... and you still *use* that connection, which is also part of our tradition... that dead or alive... your teacher is useful. The same one that was alive before... could be possibly even *more* useful after they die, than they were when they were alive. And there's... plenty of stories to... entertain ourselves with around that.

[00:13:30] But fundamentally, just speaking from my own side... if I find a practice and I work with it and try it... and I find that... my kleshas, my unbounded, conflicted emotions... lessen... I'm inclined to just continue with that. And other practices that look like they *might* do that, that maybe I received the instruction for 10 years ago and never did anything with it... and how many of those do we have?! So I might think, I think I'll try that practice. I have the instruction for it and all. I go and work on it, and... sometimes it's like, wow, where has this been?! It's wonderful. And other times...it just seems totally flat.

[00:14:22] So... I feel like I'm a proponent of... the kind of diligence, which is... I just don't quit. I just keep moving on it. And... if I can do a little practice every day, that's great. And on some days when I can do a lot of practice, that's great. And if I meet somebody in the grocery store and... they look unhappy and I can say some things and have a conversation, they feel happy, I feel good about that! And then I get a sense that the Dharma is wonderful. It's like... all of the teachings contain all the teachings, again. And so I feel inspired from *that* perspective. And sometimes, all of the things that felt like they were an inspiration... collapse. And *nothing* feels like an inspiration.

[00:15:22] So... I'm not so good at advising on particular things in terms of a long time... you know, you should do this for the next 20 years... but I think that instruction is great... for some people... and for some teachers, for some relationships with teachers, and so on. I'm more of a proponent of... you've got something that's working? Why not work *more* with it? Why not get some little instructions that might enhance it, for starters. So that you feel, "Well. That's a twist I didn't think of!" And gradually... get more and more so that you have a deeper and deeper confidence... in the path... and a deeper sense of appreciation of your own work in that regard... and, the whole thing *feels*... like this is really worthwhile. That's more my approach to it, I think.

**Student 1** [00:16:26] I remember one time you talked about when we know we're going to encounter a situation which likely will provoke something within us... like a person that whenever we see him, which is *blossom* with *fury* or something. So we prepare ourselves ahead of time... so that we know that that occasion is going to happen. And then I suppose *that* would be the

time to bring your awareness to your anger or to whatever that person provoked... and use it that way. But count on having... a little *preview* time to the experience.

**LMC** [00:17:12] To get ready? That sometimes backfires.

**Student 1** [00:17:19] Why?

**LMC** [00:17:20] Why? Because the... the most potentially helpful things, are often the most difficult. It's kind of like if I say, rest your awareness on this thing that rings the bell. There's no big inspiration there. There's not much power in it. But, if you're gonna go and meet somebody who you've had nothing but discord with for the last 30 years... to put your awareness on *that*... is powerful. It's powerful, partly because it could *sink* you. But it has the potential to actually give rise to something... extraordinary. So of course, we *want* to do that. And, it's another one of those things, you're gotta do them both, I think. Because if you always only put your awareness on... the penny that you found on the street 20 years ago... it's kind of like you get a penny's *worth* out of it. And your anger and your jealousy and your greed and pride and all the kleshas continue to swirl around. Maybe you don't even notice them because... you can rest for five minutes with your awareness on the penny. And sometimes that works.

**Student 1** [00:18:40] What, resting your awareness on the penny?!

**LMC** [00:18:43] Yeah, who's to say...

**Student 1** [00:18:43] Pennies don't provoke you much.

**LMC** [00:18:45] Well, somebody else, they might. But it's *clear* that... the reason why Kalu Rinpoche used to say, with fair regularity, heap the entire Dharma on your biggest obscuration. So I never heard... anybody say... heap the entire Dharma, that is to say, all your practice and all the things that you know about the Dharma, to heap all of that... on some little... slightly irritating obscuration. You won't get anything back for that effort. So I think the idea was that, one... you will not undermine all of those obscurations and obstacles by just... doing small things with it. It requires, requires a big thing, so therefore, the teaching... take all the Dharma that you know... and heap it all onto one thing. And you put it on the *big* thing, because if you do it on a little thing, maybe you can pat yourself on the back for having eliminated it. But actually, you didn't. In the end, you didn't get that much. And the *big* thing... can be a cause for *enormous* inspiration... by virtue of undoing the things that have bothered you for the last 30 years.

**Student 1** [00:20:15] Do you think that... if one is experiencing a sense of contentment and complacency, that one should be alarmed? Again, connected to... looking at one's obscurations.

**LMC** [00:20:41] I don't know.

**Student 1** [00:20:42] I got a soft life recently. A new house, all on one floor and... everything is pretty easy.

**LMC** [00:20:59] I don't know what that has to do with it.

**Student 1** [00:21:02] Well, it, it... doesn't arouse much. So there is a sense of contentment and complacency.

**LMC** [00:21:11] Well, again, it's what you're capable of doing and what inspires you. I remember the first time that I heard... some teacher, say, that in the context of having an authentic guru that you practice with... you take *all* the difficult circumstances that come to you as a gift from that teacher. And *definitely*, if you can master *that*, that you just hold the view... kind of like putting on your sunglasses... and you take everything that comes, whether it's joyful or not, easy or difficult... you take it all as... a gift from, from the guru. And, of course, easy things and really difficult things in the whole panoply, the whole thing comes over time. And I always thought that was a fantastic instruction. But again, even doing that for some period of time, it finally comes to a place where... something happens that we ordinarily call... *boredom*. And I don't really like that word in this context, but it's kind of like that. Like what was an inspiration yesterday is not an inspiration today.

**Student 1** [00:22:28] Thank you

**Student 2** [00:22:52] Lama Michael. I've heard you teach on seeing everything as a gift from our guru.

**LMC** [00:23:03] Cheap talk. [laughs]

**Student 2** [00:23:03] Inspiring talk. And, *turn-my-attitude-upside-down talk*. Useful talk. But you've referred to it as the heroic path. Seeing everything as a gift from my guru. And it would connect in my mind with... everyone being my mother. As in... any hardship, any challenge, any difficulty, any klesha has the... ability to be a teacher... and to somehow feed or nurture me. But the idea, like... I didn't hear it till just now that... it's all a gift from my guru... includes pleasurable things. I mean, what in my secular day to day life would call 'pleasure'. But I also heard [her] comment about the complacency. And... you used the word you didn't want to use - boredom. So it's the pleasure which has the complacency and... not boredom, but I think of it as... mind going to sleep. Awareness going to sleep. And that's hard to see as a gift from my guru until I wake up! Until... aware of it again. So it's kind of funny to hear *that* being a gift from the guru. Something that leads to complacency or being so slack, I'm not aware. Any comment?

**LMC** [00:25:17] Endless comments. [laughter] Yeah, I never actually heard... that the gift from the guru could also be joyful. I've *never* heard that. But I *have* heard that the relationship with the guru should bring you joy and all the other things. So, my sense is that it's really like whatever you receive... basically, you're acknowledging... the role of your relationship with that person, in your life... in regards to *all* of your experiences. The ones that are pleasant, the ones that are unpleasant, the *whole* thing. So that's the way that you are able to embrace... the 24/7 approach to practice, whatever it is... I'm here to make it happen. I'm here to work with it. I think that's the basis of it.

**LMC** [00:26:21] But it's also nice just when you get a rotten package in the mail, kind of... where there is something that is really difficult... if you work with a certain practice *a lot*, you're more likely to... *easily* flip into the place of... this situation is a gift from the guru. So again... all of these pieces of the Dharma contain... the entire path. So that if you can work with it from that angle, sometimes you have more things to work with. I guess I would say, more *options* to work with.

**Student 2** [00:27:31] Thank you.

**LMC** [00:27:31] How're we doing?

**Student 1** [00:28:40] Recognizing the gifts from the guru as a core piece of one's life. Is that a way to inspire devotion to the guru? I mean, I hear that phrase from time to time about *devotion* to the guru and... it's never been anything I could artificially generate. So I was looking for some way to have devotion and... the word has sort of always stopped me in my tracks because it feels like... *goo*.

**LMC** [00:29:24] What about *goo*?

**Student 1** [00:29:26] I hate it. It just isn't my modality, shall we say. ... But I did want to know what *felt* like devotion to the guru. And where does that come from? And how does one get it? I mean, it seems to be that it's something that one should have, or aspire to. And I've never quite... I mean, I can say that I *love* the guru sometimes. I mean, if I think of a particular one and... like that. But, but devotion is... kind of a different thing. It's sort of like.... they are *waaaay* up there and I'm *waaaay* down here, and I'm very devoted to them. [said facetiously]

**LMC** [00:30:46] Yeah. I also feel a little bit like the use of the word devotion itself is slightly unfortunate, in many cases. However... what it points to, is not at all unfortunate. It's really the *key* to... how we work with our practice and the relationship with the guru. And when we look at it close... we can see that one of the things that we have naturally... with a teacher that we have a relationship with and things are... you know going okay, is that we have a sense of... respect... for that person. Should be a kind of a really *strong* respect. Like respect they understand, they *know* the Dharma, they practice the Dharma. They wear it. They appear... like the Dharma. And, so we have a sense of respect... for that. And not only respect, but a sense of appreciation... for it, and for the teachings that we get. And so, if we come at it from *that* angle, we can have it a little better, a little better view of the whole thing. The word devotion is so easy to get tangled up in. I did. I always thought, like, why would I want to be a small dog... that follows the master around and nips at the heels like that? It seemed like what it was, but clearly that's not it. The respect and appreciation are major pieces... so that we can *feel*... like what we're doing is actually... very worthwhile to do.

[00:45:54] I am recalling this moment... in a conversation with Bokar Rinpoche that he used the word yearning, also. Yearning for the qualities of the guru. So, that's another one of those *moisture places*, you know, where the dry becomes moist and warm. So there was the appreciation, the respect... and the yearning for the qualities of that person.

**sangha** [00:47:15] *dedicating the merit*