

2018_09_02_3_Shamatha_LMC.mp4

*we often confuse conceptual and experiential understanding, training to rest awareness on conflicted states because they have power, **Carrying Practice:** all is gift from guru and we're fully present with each experience and then let go, habits help us remember the instructions, making connections with intention transforms into bodhicitta*

[00:02:03] So, when we ask the question... if we do... "Why is that we engage in these practices and what is the hoped-for outcome?" The best way to answer the question of what the hoped-for outcome is, is to engage in the practice itself. Since nothing is permanent... we don't need to worry about... changing something in our... mindstream that could be permanently detrimental. Quite the opposite. The intention is to... nurture our natural... state of mind. Which, while inherently awakened, it is taught... the problem is we're asleep. So, we are not in close conscious... connection with that awakened mind. But it is always, without exception, taught... that we are each fully endowed with it. No different... then the Buddha.

[00:03:59] My favorite... story of the Buddha is when... someone approached him on the street and asked what the difference between... the Buddha and this... inquiring person would be? He said, there is no difference. No difference really whatsoever. ... *But...* then the Buddha said, I am aware of my... awakened mind, the thing that all beings are endowed with. You do not see it. And therein lies the difference. Not a difference... in the persons, but just a difference... in recognizing... even just the *presence* of that awakened mind. So, one thing is clear. There is a broad... a *chasm*, really... between an understanding which is... conceptual... and an understanding which has experiential.

[00:05:45] We have in our culture and in many cultures... become thoroughly trained in conceptual abilities... by which we often receive... enormous... benefits in the world, financially and otherwise. And so, we often have difficulty... crossing the bridge back and forth between... what is *useful* to understand conceptually and what is useful to understand experientially. And we often confuse these two. If you read a book on Buddhist practice, you can finish reading the book in a relatively short time and have the clear experience that you *fully* understand what you read. Because... you know the words. You know the meanings of the sentences. Everything connects. And then as time goes by... you have the sense... that actually it doesn't work.

[00:07:30] Because fundamentally, those kleshas that we mentioned earlier, the conflicted emotional states... we have an aversion to working with those. When actually... they are fundamentally the gold. Without working with them, putting them aside, we have the illusion sometimes that we've worked with them. We've settled it. I put it aside. It doesn't bother me anymore. ... One example of that phenomena is... we often place our awareness when we practice shamatha, calm abiding, on an external object. Kind of like, this is a very nice flower, you know, so I can put it there, and I put my awareness on that flower. And because it's... beautiful... I can rest my awareness there awhile. But essentially, it doesn't have much power. When it dries up and shrivels up, I do not mourn. I just get another flower.

[00:09:09] What we need to do, over time, is train ourselves to see our own conflicted states as a flower. As something beautiful. That, of course, does not happen automatically or we'd all have it already. Because we've all... experienced conflict. So, one way... to understand it is that... rather than put a flower in front of us, we need to put in front of us... something irritating. [laughs] The *memory* of something irritating is actually not bad. Better that it be something

current. But, even just the memory... of something unresolved, something difficult that we would like to do but haven't yet really settled into, haven't done it. Anything... experiential... that is difficult.

[00:10:26] The value of that is that... difficult things, especially emotionally trying things... are endowed with great power. If I put my awareness on a nickel, it's worth just five cents. It doesn't have any power at all. But if I'm having a really difficult time with somebody else... and I'm up to my eyebrows in judgment... *that* has a lot of power. If I can place my awareness on that experience... and *rest* with it, not even with any agenda as to fix it, to do anything with it, *just* to be present with it. Many positive things follow naturally. So, I think that's why Kalu Rinpoche said... take every experience, especially the *difficult* ones, as a gift from the guru. Rather than something which feels like it's kind of a *dirty task* in front of us, we take it as a gift. The gift makes it possible for us to embrace it wholeheartedly.

[00:11:56] So, a big question is... how do you train in that? How do you get that? How do you learn to do that? And I think, maybe the most... clear answer... is twofold. One is... constantly remind ourselves that the entire dharma, like *all* of the myriad teachings, the tens of thousands of pages of teachings, the teachings from really *great* teachers who are clearly realized... we need to take every experience that we receive as a gift. Not a gift to fix broken things. Nor a gift to overcome any obstacle. But a gift that is just something that is a gift because we can be present with it. Nothing more or less than that. In order to do that, we have to get really good at it. In order to get really good at it, we have to do it over and over. So, one way to do it over and over is... of course, repeat... many times. But repeating many times while you're sitting at your cushion... gets really dull. So, we need to go out and get in trouble. [laughs] So to speak. So to speak.

[00:14:04] Just to go on a walk, for example. And let's say the walk is a 10-minute walk. So, we walked for a minute and we just notice. Today is kind of a warm day outside. So, we stop after a minute and we just... allow ourselves to fully experience, be present *with* whatever the experience is that we're having. Whether it's warmth, whether it's cold, whether it's disappointment, whether it's hunger, whether it's anxiousness, whatever it is... just to be present with it and then... let it go.

[00:14:52] So, to just be present and to just let it go are *equally* important. In order to let it go, we have to have been present with it or there is nothing to let go of. So, we have to be with it, embrace it as a gift, just be present with it and just let it dissolve. In our awareness, walk another minute. Stop again. Look and see. Your experience will be *entirely* different. It will not be what it was one minute ago. ... Even if you wanted it to be! Now, you have disappointment that what you wanted isn't there. No matter *what* you do, the experience will change. No matter what you do, the experience will disappear. No matter what you do, you cannot stop the next experience. ... So, your job... is to get really good... at *just* being present with the experience that you encounter. And witnessing... the experience dissolve... on its own. You cannot get *rid* of the experience, but the experience will also not remain.

[00:16:05] So, to *witness* that process... in *real* time... over and over during the day, separated by... just being present generally... with whatever the experience is that's going on and then stopping and noticing. And then letting go of that. And then... shortly later... stopping and noticing. I think that if you could do that, *stopping and noticing*, every 10 minutes during the day, within a week, you would have a level of realization that was unexpected. Not so difficult. How much time is that? The issue is not the time. The issue is... we can't remember. I will stop in

another minute and then it's suddenly an hour later. You forgot. So, you have to like... have it closer together, more like you stop, you look and 10 seconds later you look. And you walk around the block doing that and you say hello to somebody that you hadn't seen before. And you have an experience and they're already past you. And so, you just rest your awareness on that experience. You *have* to do it often. Because otherwise... it just breaks up. We forget. I can't tell you how many people I know, including myself, who set a goal that I would go out and I would... meditate during the day. I would stop and do three minutes, three times a day. Nine times out of 10, the end of the day, I go home and realize I didn't do it. It's not an issue of not being able. It's an issue of not being able to recall and remember and be present.

[00:17:59] So, you have to have very short intervals, really short. A minute sometimes, is too long. So, you have to mix the bringing of the awareness, not just the *conceptual* understanding. So, the idea here is that we actually come to recognize the *difference* between a conceptual understanding and an experiential understanding. If you don't get the experiential understanding, you will never get the Dharma. If you don't get the Dharma, you will give it up. Because... you're intelligent. Why would you continue to work at something that never bears any fruit... or bears little fruit? So, getting the experiential side is difficult because we can't remember what we set out to do.

[00:18:49] It's not because the Dharma is difficult. It's just we're distracted... continuously. Oh, yeah, I have to remember to do that. I'll do that first. And then it's the following day before you pick it up again. Putting yourself in a situation where there *are* distractions... just walking around the block and saying hello to three people that you see... is extremely helpful. To just continually make connection. Because making connections... is what the entire path is about. That's the truth of interdependence. You meet somebody, you say, "Hello. You look like you're having a nice day. Oh, that's so nice." Good enough. Done. You just move on. And do that again... as many times as you can during the day. So, that it becomes like, kind of your *sense* of what you do. You meet people, you give them a gift. So, not only do you get a gift, no matter what it is, you have a *sense* of... you did something nice, even you just smiled at somebody and they smiled back. They will experience that as a gift. So, you also train your mind... that your intention is to deliver something positive to every being that you meet.

[00:20:22] That easily is transformed into bodhicitta. Which is the foundation, from a power standpoint, from a *fuel* standpoint, if you will... that *is* the basis for the path. We want to... take a *big* leap and we can't do it. And then we give up. That bodhicitta needs to just be nurtured all the time. And it just keeps growing all the time. And then things that were difficult gradually start to become easy. But if we continually think, I'm not doing enough, I'm not doing enough... we never make the grade. When we actually were already there from the beginning.

[00:21:10] So my suggestion in this session, which is a short one... try to bring your awareness to your *actual* experience, whether it's pain in your leg, the sense of... joy that your mind's settled, clearly. Then you have to let go of the joy or it turns into disappointment. It's kind of like, you know, things you put in the refrigerator when you should have thrown them away. [laughter] It's like, once you've had the experience, you just let it go. And the next one will be there before you realize it. And then when it doesn't come, we see the disappointment. The disappointment is also... ripe fruit. Just have it. Just notice it. Get good at that. Noticing your experience. So that when you engage in the practice and you have an experience, *you just notice the experience*. That's how the experience grows. That's how we come facile at the experience. How it goes deeper. It doesn't need to be polluted with... it wasn't big enough. See? That just undermines it immediately. Which is why it's good to have one breath. You take one breath, you follow the

breath, you let go. *Perfect!* [laughs] Small perfections are more important than big disappointments.

[00:22:41] So let's take our time now. We'll recite the refuge prayer. And we'll use the rest of the time then to settle our awareness on the experiences and just see it and let it go. Refuge Prayer three times.

sangha [00:23:04] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer.*

[00:23:09] *period of meditation*

sangha [00:46:35] *dedicating the merit*