

Open Letter to My Teacher

The following is an open letter that I've recently sent to Geshe-La. I hope it serves to answer some of the questions about my recent decision to remove Geshe Michael's teachings from Lam Rim Radio. I apologize in advance for any further confusion or harm it may cause to the minds of those who read it. Please remember, it is simply my own unenlightened interpretation of the situation and the actions I am taking as a result. Love and Peace, Roy (aka "Lobsang")

July 12, 2003

OPEN LETTER TO MY TEACHER

Dearest Geshe Michael –

I hope this letter finds you healthy and happy.

I wanted to take a few moments to give you a brief update on what I've been up to since we last met in February 2000 and also to share some of my thoughts on your recent announcements.

Family and work have consumed most of my time and unfortunately my meditation practice is currently non-existent. Not in the ultimate sort of way. More in a conventional, just plain old, not sitting on the cushion sort of way. I have, however, been quite productive in helping to spread the Dharma through my Lam Rim Radio project.

As you may know, it launched in October of 1999 and except for a few minor power outages when we turned on too many Christmas lights or ran the dishwasher, washing machine, and hair dryer at the same time, the Lam Rim “servers” that grace our house have been faithfully delivering Dharma to the Planet Earth 24 by 7 ever since. Based on my rough estimates, more than 500,000 hours of Tibetan Buddhist teachings have been downloaded or broadcast from the site as of this writing. This equals about 30 million listening minutes or if I'm doing my math correctly, it would be like hearing more than 57 years of teachings without pause. Looked at another way, if a Geshe were to begin formally teaching at age 30 and taught for 8 hours per day every day, year after year, they would be doing this until the very ripe old age of 200. I'm guessing there's probably stories of such great Indian or Tibetan masters but haven't yet run across them in my studies.

Which brings me to some recent changes on the site that I wanted to inform you of. In short, I've removed your teachings from the Lam Rim Radio home page. Since complete removal of the teachings from the site would leave a number of existing students in a lurch and break a number of website links throughout the Internet, the content is still there if you know where to look. It's quite possible, that I'm going to become a bit of a pariah in certain circles as a result of these actions, but I feel it's the correct thing to do to protect the minds of new Dharma students who visit the station in growing numbers every day (500 or more per day and growing).

From a personal perspective, I also have some major beefs with the way you've been acting since you started this whole retreat. First off, I feel you haven't been completely honest about what's been going on. I was at Diamond Mountain before the retreat started and helped to build your floors and put up your yurt – no easy matter, especially considering there weren't any instructions. And at no time was

there any mention about you sharing your Yurt with anyone. In fact, I recall the spot where Christie's own yurt was being constructed. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary but with the perspective of time, it now appears that it may have been done to create a false impression. Why weren't you upfront with your plans before the retreat started? I'm sure I am not alone in wishing I had known more about what my contributions of time and energy and money were supporting from the beginning.

Further, when you came out to give the Quiet Retreat teachings, why did you continue to emphasize that all the retreatants were alone and in isolation in their yurts except for the group ceremonies? Okay, so someone on the Diamond Mountain website explained this away as a perfectly acceptable mode of speaking for someone practicing complete equanimity, but frankly, I don't buy it. Having listened to many hundreds of hours of your ACI and Diamond Mountain recordings in the course of my Lam Rim Radio work, I don't seem to ever recall you equivocating in your teachings. In fact, throughout the ACI Series you always seemed to go out of your way to make sure your students clearly and accurately understood what you were saying even if it meant your classes ran late.

So now that you've "come out", I'm further confused by your behavior and outward appearance. Why would someone wear monk's robes, long hair, jewelry, and openly proclaim to be engaged in secret consort practices with a young woman? To my mind, this certainly doesn't map to the strict vow-keeping and morality-teaching Geshe we said goodbye to in the spring of 2000. I have to say, it certainly doesn't have me thinking you've seen emptiness or have become enlightened. In fact, quite the opposite. Perhaps you've gone crazy, or have become possessed by some evil Mara trying to knock the first American Geshe (and Tibetan Buddhism in the west) off a successful trajectory, or perhaps you've simply fallen in love and things are a little confusing for you right now as well.

And then it struck me. I started thinking about something you once taught and even mentioned again in your recent interview. About how important it is to deeply examine and consider what it is your Lama really wants you to do. Then a realization struck me, "Hey, this might actually be a test!" One of those big, tough Dharma "life exams" you always talk about, one perhaps not so much different from the ones you're facing these days. Nga yi ka sek che dar ser shin gu chir min ("Don't just believe what I teach; treat it like gold: melt it, cut it, rub it.")

So while this test is much harder than asking me to put up your Mongolian yurt without an instruction manual, I accept your challenge. With deep respect Dear Geshe-La and the knowledge that things aren't always what they appear to be, it seems what you're really asking me to do is call you out on your extremely aberrant behavior. And by way of a formal protest, I hereby take your teachings off Lam Rim Radio until all this confusion comes to an end.

In closing, I apologize if my words have disturbed your mind or the minds of other students. If out of my ignorance I'm placing a shoe on the head of a Buddha statue, it is only out of the sincerest love and concern that he not become drenched in the rain.

With Much Love and Prayers,

Roy
Lam Rim Radio

May these words immediately end all suffering (war, sickness, strife, wrong views, etc) and the causes for suffering of all sentient beings in the six realms. May whoever listens, sees, touches, remembers, or even thinks or talks about this letter or Lam Rim Radio, never be born in the lower realms, receive only perfect human rebirths, meet a perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friend, and quickly achieve Guru Buddha's enlightened state.

Excerpt from the "To the Inner Kingdom" Oct 2000 transcript of Geshe Michael Roach available on the Diamond Mountain website:

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" ...We were alone, each person. The nights are very dark, and there are many, many strange sounds...

...Every kind of creepy, crawly, desert thing has crawled in people's yards and yurts, and sometimes very frightening things, but I think, the hardest thing is the loneliness, to be alone for month after month.

We see each other for the holidays, like Sojong, confession ceremony, twice a month. When we're in deep retreat we don't see each other at all, so for a month or maybe two months. Each person has been very strong, become strong, and they showed a lot of courage, and respected the retreat boundaries. They've worked very, very hard. They worked for, some of them years, to learn the meditations and visualizations that they have to do. We don't allow ourselves any other kind of stimulation, there's only meditation and some study of what to meditate about, and each person has done it very, very well."