

A Gift of Liberation

Course Eight—The Beauty of a Teacher

Homework Master, Class One:

The Beauty of Taking Ourselves to a Teacher

1) Pabongka Rinpoche says that if two conditions are present, then turning ourselves into a Buddha is as easy as baking a cake. What are these two conditions?

[The two conditions are:

1) A Teacher that we find is one who is capable of teaching us the entire path to enlightenment, from beginning to end. (The student should list people who are closest to being this for themselves.)

2) From our side, as a disciple we are a worthy vessel for the teaching: able and willing to undertake whatever training and hardship which may be required. (The student could list some training or hardships that they themselves could be undertaking more seriously.)]

2) What, according to the great Pa Dampa Sangye (ca. 1100), is the price of a ticket to paradise? How long, according to the great Sakya Pandita (1182-1251), does the trip take?

[Pa Dampa Sangye says that “If your Lama gives you a ride, you can go wherever you want to.” And he says that “the ticket costs your constant affection and respect for them.” The Sakya Pandita says that the karma you could collect in a thousand eons in the way of the open teachings, by giving away parts of your body and all your possessions, can be gathered in a single instant by using the Path of the Lama, and showing them this affection and respect.]

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3) Arya Nagarjuna wrote a very special secret work entitled “The Five Steps.” In this he makes a point about our relationship with our Teacher which is quite similar to a correct understanding of the part in the Bhagavad Gita where Lord Krishna advises Arjuna not to be attached to the fruits of his good deeds. Explain.

[In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna advises Arjuna not to be attached to the fruits of his good deeds. This though needs some explanation. “Attachment”—on a higher level, and in the wisdom literature of ancient India—refers to being attached to our old way of seeing things; that is, believing that things are coming from their own side, and not from mental seeds planted by how we have treated others around us.

With regard to our good deeds then, “attachment” would NOT refer to the expectation that if we do a kindness to another out of love, then at the same time we are being kind to ourselves, since we will experience a beautiful karmic result, whether we want to or not.

As they say, “You can hide but you can’t run”—and this applies to the natural results of karmic seeds. If for example you help someone else who is having trouble in a relationship, then your own relationships will get sweeter and sweeter, whether you want them to or not—and whether or not you have sought this result when you first acted.

“Attachment” in this case would be, by the way, believing that your own relationship could ever get better without helping someone else’s relationship.

Here in *A Gift of Liberation, Thrust into Our Hands*, Pabongka Rinpoche quotes Arya Nagarjuna’s *Five Steps* to make the same point about any person who receives teachings through the kindness of their Lama. Once this has happened, we are destined for liberation, whether we want to go or not.

The Arya compares it to slipping off the edge of a towering mountain. Gravity is going to make you fall, whether you want to or not—and he points out that there is no going back.]

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4) What very famous and accurate statement did the Kadampa teacher Geshe Tulungpa make about the benefit of serving one's Teacher?

[Geshe Tulunga, who lived 1032-1116, was once considering preparing a beautiful meal for all of the monks in his entire county, known as Tulung. But then suddenly he understood the supreme importance of a personal spiritual teacher, and said about his own teacher, Chen-ngawa (1038-1103), "It is greater good karma to give a bite of food to my Lama's dog than to serve a feast to all the monks of our county." And then indeed he would always offer tidbits to his Lama's dog. (I'm sure he also prepared the feasts regularly as well!)]

5) In a turn of phrase that we often see repeated elsewhere, a famous secret text by the Buddha called "A Song of the Diamond" states that "It is better to make offering to a single pore of your Lama's body than to all of the Buddhas who have ever existed; who exist now; and who ever will exist." How does Pabongka Rinpoche clarify the meaning of the expression "single pore of your Lama's body" here? How would it apply to your own Teacher?

[The Rinpoche notes that the expression "single pore of your Lama's body" here refers not literally to a pore of their body, but rather to things like their personal horse; the dog who guards their door; their attendants; and workers who do things for them. (The student should then try to relate this question to taking care of specific things and people that serve their own personal teacher.)]

Coffee shop assignment: Please meet with at least one other person—or better, a group of people—whom you didn't know well before this teaching; do your homework together and discuss together any questions you have. Please write here where, when, and with whom you did your homework:

Meditation assignment: 15 minutes early in the day, and 15 minutes later in the day, go through a mental list of people who have in the past, or are now, serving as one of your Teachers, in any field of endeavor. Then think of the

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training that you have undertaken and now wish to undertake from them, and consider what hardships you have had to face, or may have to face in this training. Finally review your willingness to overcome these hardships. Please write here the two times that you started these meditations.