

A Gift of Liberation
Course Eight—The Beauty of a Teacher
Homework Master, Class Three:
The Uselessness of Living Without a Teacher

1) Since the dangers of taking yourself to a Teacher and then later disrespecting or rejecting them in any way are so incredibly serious, please list here the first four of the eight traditional dangers, as described by Pabongka Rinpoche in his *Gift of Liberation*.

[Here are the first four dangers:

(1) When you criticize your Teacher, you criticize all of the Buddhas that there are.

(2) For every moment of anger you feel towards your Teacher, you spend an eon in the hell realms.

(3) Even if you learn the secret teachings, you will never achieve the highest goal, if you have disparaged your Teacher.

(4) Once you have disparaged your Teacher, then the more effort you put into the secret teachings, the more likely they will take you to hell.]

2) Since the dangers of disparaging our Teacher are so extremely serious, what course of action does Pabongka Rinpoche advise, from the very beginning?

[The Rinpoche says that—since the dangers of disparaging our Teacher are so extraordinary—then before we take ourselves to any Teacher we must examine them very carefully, and get to know all about them, their life, their

A Gift of Liberation
Course Eight: The Beauty of a Teacher
Homework Master, Class Three

work, their teaching, and their students before we make the huge jump of making them our Teacher.]

3) There is a famous quotation from a text in the Tengyur canon called *A Commentary on Difficult Points in the Secret Teaching of the Ebony Foe* concerning the measure of how much (and what) a person needs to teach us before we are required to observe the correct “Lama Protocol” towards them. Please describe.

[This famous quotation goes as follows:

Anyone who listens
To a single verse of teaching
From another person
And then fails to treat them
As a Lama should be treated
Will take a hundred births as a dog,
And after that born
In the most desperate of lives
Among humans.

Pabongka Rinpoche, and all the great Lamas of the Buddhist tradition since Lord Buddha, have interpreted this to mean that we must pay high respect even to someone for example who has taught us the alphabet, or to read. And in fact the lines of this very text say this exact same thing in the immediate context of the verse quoted.]

4) What does the famous Guhya Samaja Tantra (The Secret Collection), one of the highest of all secret teachings in the world, say about a person who disparages their Teacher and then tries to practice any form of these teachings?

[The root tantra, or mother text, of this secret tradition says that—even if a person has committed one of the five greatest sins that someone can do—then still they can achieve their highest goals, by following the secret teachings. But in the same breath this text says that—if a person has disparaged their Teacher with strong feeling—then they can achieve

A Gift of Liberation
Course Eight: The Beauty of a Teacher
Homework Master, Class Three

nothing, regardless of how hard they apply themselves, even to these highest teachings.]

5) Why is it that the highest teachings of Buddhism, the Diamond Way teachings, “backfire” and take us to the lower realms, if we practice them after disparaging our Lama?

[The highest practice of both the open and secret teachings is to take ourselves to a Teacher in the proper way. Our ultimate goal is to make contact with Enlightened Beings and then learn from them to be such a Being ourselves—because then we can truly serve and help the entire world, every being in it suffering and dying. The instructions of a living, enlightened individual are absolutely necessary for this quest; and in fact the first person that we strive to “contact” as a Buddha is our own Teacher. If instead we disparage this person, either verbally or even just mentally, then we have destroyed the foundation of the entire Buddhist path.]

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 the principal Teachers in your life, whether in your family; your schooling; your work; or your spiritual journey. Try to recall if you have ever verbally or mentally disparaged any of these Teachers, and then confess it in your heart if you have. Please write here the two times that you started these meditations.