

Qualities of the Dharma Teacher and the way we should teach.

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June 14th 2009 Samye Ling

Behaviour and Attitude: it takes a long time to train and learn. Teaching dharma is not something we can teach any old how. It is not a product to be distributed or a business.

Whether we do something well or not so well this life depends on how good the instructions have been. This is for worldly things. In Dharma it also depends on quality of the teachings and lifetimes of activity. If a person does not have good qualities we will go backwards. If they are mediocre we will stay about the same. If they do have the qualities, it will benefit our inner and our outer life. A teacher with the qualities are like a royal treasury for they can take us higher and higher.

People are so different: in their outlook on life and their different qualities. A teacher needs to understand the yantras, the range of levels of the dharma. They need to lead them skillfully along their path. they need to help the student so that it makes sense to somebody and really help, not harm.

A good teacher helps a person cope with their problems like anger, or dullness or karma kleshas and give them skillfully the methods to cope with them. they are like a rain of nectar putting out fires.

A good teacher remains unmoved to the outcome of teaching – they must have an attitude of forbearance – earth remains unmoved. So if people are bitter, antagonistic or grateful, it does not afflict one.

treat everyone with the same loving care and attention, whether they practice well, are famous, are not terrific – like a parent loving all their children equally.

being stable like a mountain they are not moved by jealousy attachment clinging etc, No matter what happens beneath the surface.

a good teacher should be someone who can clear away the doubts – like the sun or moon or light dispelling darkness of ignorance.

if they have all of those qualities then they are a wonderful teacher.

They are not in it for fame, etc – they are in it for their students – really trying to bring out the best of those who look to them. At the very least they need:

good attitude, knowledge, and be experienced in what they are teaching ie shamata for example, they should have experienced what it means.

If they don't have wholesome and healthy attitude it is dangerous. Why is it so dangerous? Because they are showing the path which is their qualities and so would mould their students in the wrong way to go.

In the real world you can see if someone does a job well. With dharma teachings the repercussions are going life after life. Also teacher acts as an example amongst students because students copy their teacher.

1. so the behaviour is important. the way they dress should be in keeping and fitting to the society in which they are teaching. Not strange.

also in the general way they handle their physical behaviour, not to look with anger or sullenness at their students. the teacher sets the example and the students copy.

2. speech, lots of injurious or idle talk is not okay, it should be sweet or harmonious

3 mind, It is invisible in the teacher but it becomes known. It should be a wholesome beneficial mind, which is loving and kind and will foster a loving kind attitude amongst each other in their studies. All this applies in schools, monasteries and dharma centres; setting a good example – crucial. We do become like our teachers.

At Least a good attitude and good qualities.

If there are not qualities and caring mind, repercussions are terrible. A murderer kills one person, a dharma teacher without the right good qualities damages and effects people for life times.

teacher in Tibetan is geyghen

gey = virtue, good personal conduct, study, knowledge, meditation experienced

ghen = age/elder. Like an elder in virtue – come to great maturity, embodies these virtues.

geyghen = elder in virtue

If they dont have this they become

tughen = bad example, an elder in harmful things, they show us all the wrong things.

we really need to think about that and apply it. Are we becoming elder in virtue or elders of bad example?

how to teach

1. children
2. adults
3. buddhists

1 teaching of children is very important. If a good seed is planted, it will grow. Help them have a good mind and good attitude towards other sentient beings and all forms of life need caring. Caring = good. harmful, damaging, hurtful = this is not good. highest degrees don't matter if they do not have a sense of ethics, decency and caring behaviour. they could be very dangerous.

2 teaching adults

they come from different backgrounds, attitudes, education etc. some things are univereal. Teach them

never to harm anyone else

this you can teach anyone and everyone

No one wants to be unhappy

other beings are just like you – they want to be happy and not be hurt. this understanding should open up more care for others, help them work better together.

3 teaching committed buddhists

monastic setting – mudras, tormas, music, pujas, etc – all these need to be learnt of course but they are not the most important – what is most important is the study- so they know for example the Three Refuges, the real meaning of the Dharma.

It is necessary to teach, for people to learn, the Refuges, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, people need instruction on those things.

Many people say “ oh I am a Buddhist” but they don't really understand that.

A teacher must be committed and careful. Teachers should not look down in arrogance on others or be like a king, being proud. they also must not have a commercial attitude to the dharma. they must give up pride, arrogance, anger etc. The teacher MUST give them up. Any financial interest in the dharma teaching is not important – it is not for your benefit, and it does not ever matter how many turn up etc.

Akong Rinpoche 18th June 2009 11.30am

It would be helpful if there was peer supervision in place. Also it would be helpful to have a complaints procedure for when students have a complaint about a teacher, just like the complaints procedure in universities. I would like this implemented immediately. Also, we should have a management committee of five people at least for choosing who is or who is not teaching courses such as the mindfulness etc. It should not be done by just one person. So we can have Lama Yeshe Rinpoche, and Rob Nairn, and also a person from the university and two neutral people. This management committee must be about making the decision who teaches and who does not teach. If someone is weak in one area 5% then maybe you need to give them training in that area, not just throw them out. I am not against anyone, or punishing anyone, I want the education to go forward. Do not criticise and blame. Do not say 'He said this' and 'I don't like this'. 'He treats me like this', 'He shouldn't do this' etc. I don't want people who talk like this being my friend.

A teacher must have:

kindness

understanding

diligence

patience

in order to be a good teacher.

If the teacher has not got enough patience, tolerance and has anger, hatred, jealousy, inflated ego, and ignorance, it is a problem.

The teacher in Buddhism is a mould, you form people. My experience over the past few days is that teachers are very angry people, defending what they teach. You have wanted to be right. You need to be flexible people.

You need to help people with their problems, teach people to be less angry, have less hatred and aggression. We are teaching

- gentleness,
- kindness
- and tolerance,
- and we have to HAVE these first.
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If you do not have it yourself, then you cannot educate others.

So you would have to be students of the people who are kinder and more loving and not their teachers if they have more than we have.

The foundation is compassion. We must not present more suffering to our students.

All of you have problems and neurosis so we must know how to laugh, how to be kind and how to be tolerant.

Do not become like an iron rod, where you have no flexibility. How can you teach someone to be flexible if you are not?

The great teachers have such humbleness. The non great teachers insist they know so much. For example anyone who says they see an aura, they are imagining it and are not for real.

The key is compassion and being humble.

Words are so important, they can really hurt. People can even kill themselves because of harsh words said to them. Do not use harsh words.

You have seen it here in this week. A discussion, then an expression changes, just through a word and there is friction and hurt and defensiveness.

Don't teach what you don't know. Do not teach what you do not embody.

You should develop understanding so that when you see a student's weakness, you can help them to see it and overcome it. You can say directly and honestly, this is what you are doing. You are not there to build up a chummy relationship. But you need to be able to be helpful not unkind.

Since we are leading blind people we need NOT to be blind. Teachers have to earnestly work out what they know then they can teach that.

People teaching mindfulness and compassion need to embody these.

People say to me, "I have done so much for you over the years, why are you not being nice to me?" I am not here to be nice to you, It is not my job to be a honey machine, you want drops of honey. that is not my job.

Druon:

the motivation of the teacher is important. We need to examine this. Are we in it for personal gain: I will give you teachings and you will give me money, like a salesperson. Are we doing this for fame, praise, affection or admiration? this would be teaching for self interest.

It would be difficult to anyone to have perfect motivation. But look inside and examine very carefully. Be more concerned with the students and less interested in your own gratification and because of this something will be communicated to the student.

If the person whose teaching does not have compassion, but talks to others about how to develop compassion but the students achieve a little or some compassion, it may not be so bad.

But say a student does not understand or disagrees and then so the teacher gets angry, this is bad. We need to smarten up!

Akong Rinpoche:

We talk freely about loving kindness, compassion and tolerance but lose our temper when asked challenging questions – then we have not done enough practice ourselves. Maybe you have doubts about spiritual practice but you keep teaching others because it is your income and because people think well of you.

You can't just create new courses, look in books, or dictionary.

you must practice

- being humble
- being kind
- being tolerant

if someone interrupts your talk saying you know nothing – think of seeing that person as your guru. Instead of blaming him – learn and be grateful.

A good teacher means that when friends and students come to you, you have to say – now you've reached my limit. Go now and see another teacher. Don't hold onto them because you want to keep people. You should never try to hold students, send them to others. They will have more respect for you. They will appreciate you for passing them onto another. Many Tibetan teachers do not do this. They are not able to pass on.

Also many students cannot appreciate – they move from one teacher to another. A bad

student.

17th July after Medicine Buddha empowerment. Akong Rinpoche.

Someone may have done a 3 or 8 year retreat and be teaching the dharma. They are not yet perfect, they have failings but the dharma they are saying is true and pure so hear that.

Saying that a person has 20 years of meditation experience, it is not necessarily helpful. They may have sat for 2 hours a day but how much of that two hours were they actually present and practising and not sleeping or daydreaming?