

HH Dalai Lama on seeing your teacher as a mahasiddha

Transcribed from Video 6 of the Western Dharma Students Conference with HH in 1993, at 119.06, on criticising a teacher after you've taken them as your Vajra master. "But even, I think, the individual student, the belief that the actions of the lama are that of a mahasiddha is something really marvelous, but they should not take it on a public level. One may individually feel that the action of the guru are skilful means of a mahasiddha but one should not take it as a public stand and try to justify it. In public we must follow the general Buddhist path.

Unless that lama some really genuine miracle things perform, then all right, with some scientist carrying out a test for genuine miracle, then we must accept. Otherwise we cannot allow these things."

And from Video 4 about 40 mins in:

"Historically, although some Buddhist saints have acted with strange modes of ethical conduct, they were fully realized beings and knew what was of long-term benefit to others. But nowadays, such conduct is harmful to the Dharma and must be stopped. Even though one's realizations may be equal to those of divine beings, one's behavior must conform to convention. If someone says that since everyone has Buddha mind, any kind of conduct is acceptable, or that teachers do not need to follow ethical precepts, it indicates that they do not correctly understand emptiness or cause and effect. ... "We may criticize a teacher's abusive actions or negative qualities while we respect them as a person at the same time. There are still some beneficial aspects of the guru. A mistaken action doesn't destroy their good qualities. If you criticize in this way, there is no danger of hellish rebirth as a result. Motivation is the key: speaking out of hatred or desire for revenge is wrong. However, if we know that by not speaking out, their bad behavior will continue and will harm the Buddhadharma, and we still remain silent, that is wrong."

Chogyam Trungpa on seeing everything the teacher does as perfect. From Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism p 25.

"Whenever we experience something unpleasant, a disappointment, we try to rationalise it: "Of course this must be an act of wisdom on the part of the guru, because I am quite certain the guru doesn't do harmful things. Guruji is the perfect being and whatever Guruji does is right. Whatever Guruji does is for me, because he is on my side. So I can afford to open. I can safely surrender. I know I am treading the right path." Something is not quite right about such an attitude. It is, at best, simple-minded and naive."

The Dalai Lama in *The Path to Enlightenment* on seeing everything the guru does as perfect

The problem with the practice of seeing everything the guru does as perfect is that it very easily turns to poison for both the guru and the disciple. Therefore, whenever I teach this practice, I always advocate that the tradition of “every action seen as perfect” not be stressed. Should the guru manifest un-dharmic qualities or give teachings contradicting dharma, the instruction on seeing the spiritual master as perfect must give way to reason and dharma wisdom. I could think to myself, “They all see me as a Buddha, and therefore will accept anything I tell them.” Too much faith and imputed purity of perception can quite easily turn things rotten.

“The practice of tantra is never an excuse for unethical behaviour. If one understands Vajrayana well, there are no grounds to excuse bad behaviour.” HH Dalai Lama

"Rely on the teachings to evaluate a guru: Do not have blind faith, but also no blind criticism." His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Chapter 10 of the Tibetan Book of Living and Dying by Sogyal Rinpoche:

“There is a great danger, called in the tradition [of Dzogchen] “losing the Action in the View.” A teaching as high and powerful as Dzogchen entails an extreme risk. Deluding yourself that you are liberating thoughts and emotions, when in fact you are nowhere near being able to do so, and thinking that you are acting with the spontaneity of a true Dzogchen yogin, all you are doing is simply accumulating vast amounts of negative karma. As Padmasambhava says, and this is the attitude we all should have: Though my View is as spacious as the sky, My actions and respect for cause and effect are as fine as grains of flour.”

TSONGKHAPA

Question: We must practice in accordance with the gurus' words. Then what if we rely on the gurus and they lead us to an incorrect path or employ us in activities that are contrary to the three vows? Should we do what they say?

Reply: With respect to this, Gunaprabha's Sutra on the Discipline states, “If the abbot instructs you to do what is not in accord with the teachings, refuse.” Also, the Cloud of Jewels Sutra says, “With respect to virtue act in accord with the gurus' words, but do not act in accord with the gurus' words with respect

to nonvirtue.” Therefore, you must not listen to nonvirtuous instructions. The twelfth birth story clearly gives the meaning of not engaging in what is improper.

However, it is improper to take the gurus’ wrong actions as a reason for subsequent misbehavior such as disrespecting, reproaching, or despising the gurus. Rather, excuse yourself politely, and do not engage in what you were instructed to do. The Fifty Verses on the Guru:

“If you cannot reasonably do as the guru has instructed, Excuse yourself with soothing words.”

– Lam Rim Chen Mo

Pema Chodron on Shenpa:

"Shenpa, or the urge, the hook, that triggers our habitual tendency to close down. We get hooked in that moment of tightening when we reach for relief. To get unhooked, we begin by recognizing that moment of unease and learn to relax in that moment."

From The Guru Drinks Bourbon by Dzongsar Khyentse

Bad Guru Checklist p. 114

- Lacks knowledge • Has no devotion to the Dharma, his or her own guru, or the sangha • Doesn't have a living tradition • Takes away from virtuous surroundings • Has an untamed body, speech, and mind • Is proud and hypocritical • Has no pure perception • Is quite nasty and vicious to others • Is judgmental • Is fussy about food, drinks, possessions, and hotel rooms • Does not abide by the Buddha's rules of Vinaya, Bodhisattvayana, and of course the Vajrayana • Praises himself in all his speech even though he uses words of humility • Subtly denigrates others • Does not fear wrongdoing • Has no power of forgiveness • Has a very weak sense of shame • Gives teachings that provide no antidote • Has a self-cherishing agenda • Is annoyed by your disciplined Dharma practice

Celebrity Gurus

"Some disciples treat their gurus like movie stars. They go around wearing necklaces with the guru's photo, or they hang the guru's picture on their wall. Some kind of fall in love with the guru, but its more like infatuation, the way others fall in love with their therapists. It becomes very personal and can be easily mishandled." Many Tibetan lamas- also Thai, Burmese, all kinds of Buddhist teachers- allow a kind of merchandising of their image. It's very confusing. The extent of promotion often correlates with their level of insecurity. They have a feeling of having to sell themselves. P. 74, Dzongsar Jamang Khyentse Rinpoche, *The Guru Drinks Bourbon*

The Guru Business

The Buddha said in the *Dhammapadam*, "I cannot remove your suffering; you must remove your suffering," and "I cannot share my enlightenment". He also said "you are your own master; no one else can be your master". . . . Bolstered by these statements, *Shravakayana* and *Mahayana* Buddhists chastise tantric Buddhists for this guru business, which seems to promise that an external master can remove suffering and even bestow enlightenment. To them Guru devotion goes against the Buddha's word. However, from the *Vajrayana* point of view, the guru-student relationship is very much in line with the words of the Buddha. There is a reason that devotion is the quintessence of the *Vajrayana*. As we shall see, it does not contradict the Buddha because ultimately the tantric student understands that the guru is not an external being." P. 5, Dzongsar Jamang Khyentse Rinpoche, *The Guru Drinks Bourbon*

Following a Guru

Once you take the initiation, once you take someone as your guru, then you must think, "this is my projection". Until you have the ability and understanding to realize this is your projection, your judgement will overrule and you won't have pure, open vision. you can still listen, and you can still be there, but without accepting the guru as your projection, it's not advisable to take tantric teachings. All that said, activities that appear to be all the wrong reasons for following a guru could turn out to be the right ones for a disciple with superior faculties. WHY CAN'T THEY BE PERFECT Why are our human gurus so apparently fallible? Why can't they be perfect like the Buddha? A human guru will often exhibit some of the inherent flaws and imperfections that we also struggle with, but as a result he or she will be a far more effective teacher than a perfect guru. Ironically, it's human fallibility itself that provides the guru with the most effective tools. If a guru manifested as a completely perfect being, you might not be able to communicate with him or her because

you are not perfect....P. 118, Dzongsar Jamang Khyentse Rinpoche, The Guru Drinks Bourbon (added by Eric Soyeux)

The Nature of the Guru

“There is a reason that devotion is the quintessence of the Vajrayana. As we shall see, it does not contradict the Buddha because ultimately the tantric student understands that the guru is not an external being.” P. 5, Dzongsar Jamang Khyentse Rinpoche, The Guru Drinks Bourbon