

# Relying on a Teacher

## The defining characteristics of the teacher to be relied upon.

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A description of a teacher who instructs you in the stages of the paths of the three persons of different capacities and guides you to the mahayana, which is the path to Buddhahood.

Rely on a mahayana teacher who is disciplined, serene, thoroughly pacified;  
Has good qualities surpassing those of the student; is energetic; has a wealth of scriptural knowledge;  
Possesses loving concern; has thorough knowledge of reality and skill in instructing disciples;  
And has abandoned dispiritedness

—Maitreya

### **disciplined - trained in ethical discipline**

Just as a trainer trains a wild horse with a good bridle, so too teachers learn ethical discipline to control their senses and turn towards suitable actions with great effort.

### **serene - accomplished meditative serenity**

A state where the mind remains peacefully withdrawn. This is achieved through mindfulness and vigilance in your ethical discipline. Turning away from wrongdoing and engaging in good activities.

### **thoroughly pacified - accomplished the training in wisdom**

accomplished through analyzing the meaning of reality on the basis of meditative serenity wherein the mind becomes servicable.

Teachers must also have wealth of scriptural learning

Knowledge of reality refers to a special training in wisdom which is the knowledge of the selflessness of phenomena.. it is said to be best if the teachers have a perception of reality... but if they don't have it, it is acceptable for them to have know reality through scripture and reasoning.

Those who have not disciplined themselves have no basis for disciplining others.

You must emulate those whose good qualities surpass your own.

The 6 qualities are the good qualities obtained for oneself.

1. disciplined
2. serene
3. thoroughly pacified
4. having good qualities that surpass the student
5. wealth of knowledge from studying many scriptures
6. thorough knowledge of reality

The remaining qualities are good qualities for looking after others

1. being energetic
2. having skill in instruction
3. possessing loving concern
4. abandoning dispiritness

Sages do not wash away others' sins with water,  
They do not clear away being's sufferings with their hands,  
They do not transfer their own knowledge to others;  
They liberate by teaching the truth of reality

They just look after others by accurately showing them the path.

These 5 qualities -- loving concern, knowledge of reality, and the 3 trainings are foremost.

Bo-do-wa

The guru who helps you achieve liberation is the foundation of your deepest aspiration, therefore you should understand these defining characteristics well and seek one who has them. Also, those who wish to have students should strive to gain these good qualities.

## The defining characteristics of the student who relies upon the teacher

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It is said that one who is nonpartisan, intelligent, and diligent  
Is a vessel for listening to the teachings.  
The good qualities of the instructor do not appear otherwise  
Nor do those of fellow listeners

—Aryadeva

If you do not have these 3 qualities then the influence of your own faults will cause even an extremely pure teacher who instructs you in the teachings to appear to have faults.

If you have found a teacher with all the good qualities it may be hard to recognize their presence.

1. **Non Partisan** means not taking sides. If you are partisan you will be obstructed by your bias and will not recognize the good qualities. Because of this you will not discover the meaning of good teachings. 'Taking sides' means to have attachment to your own religious system and hostility towards others.
2. **Intelligent** If you do not have the mental force to distinguish between good path and counterfeit paths of false explanation you are not fit to listen to the teachings. By this account you will give up what is unproductive and take up what is productive.
3. **diligence** If like a drawing of a person who listens to the teachings, you are inactive, you are not fit to listen to the teachings. Therefore you must have great diligence.

You can add being focused, and having respect for the teaching and the instructor to this. These 5 qualities can be reduced to 4.

1. Striving very diligently at the teachings
2. focusing the mind well when listening to the teaching
3. having great respect for the teaching and its instructor
4. discarding bad explanations and retaining good explanations

Having intelligence is the favorable condition that gives rise to these four. Being non partisan gets rid of the unfavorable condition of taking sides.

## How the student relies upon the teacher

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In general a teacher is someone from whom you have received the teachings kind words. Specifically a teacher is someone who skillfully guides you with instructions of all the paths in their entirety.

### 1. How to rely in thought

#### a. A general indication of the attitudes needed to rely upon the teacher

The Array of Stalks Sutra states that you should respect and serve your guru with 9 attitudes... if these are further condensed, 4 points remain.

1. **Attitude which is like a dutiful child** - Give up your independence and submit to your guru's will.
2. **The attitude which is like a diamond** - This means to make the relationship between teacher and student close and stable, not to be split apart by anyone.

3. **The Attitude which is like the Earth** - This means to take on all the responsibilities of the guru's activities and to not become dispirited by any of the responsibilities asked of you.
4. **How to Assume Responsibilities** - This itself contains 6 - 1.
  1. **Attitude like the foothills.** which means that any suffering that may arise does not sway you.
  2. **Attitude like a worldly servant** - perform even the worst tasks in their entirety without wavering
  3. **Attitude like a sweeper** - get rid of all pride and feelings of superiority and consider yourself to be lower than your guru. 'The water of good qualities do not collect on the heights of pride'
  4. **Attitude like a foundation** - means to take on the heavy responsibilities of the most arduous activities of your guru with pleasure
  5. **Attitude like a dog** - means to not get angry with your guru berates or despises you. Persist tirelessly, respectfully, and diligently seek the teachings.
  6. **Attitude like a ferry** - not to tire of deeds for your guru's sake no matter how many times you engage in your guru's activities

## b. In particular, training in faith, the root

Faith is the best of vehicles,  
Definitely delivering you to Buddhahood,  
Therefore persons of intelligence  
Rely on the guidance of faith

Virtue will not arise  
In people who have no faith  
Just as green sprouts do not grow  
From seeds scorched by fire.

- Ten Teachings Sutra

Thus in light of what you gain when it is present and what you lose when it is not present, faith is the basis of all good qualities.

If you would ask o lord of secrets, how disciples should view masters, then I would answer that they should view them just as they view the bhagavan.

If the Disciples view their masters this way  
They will always cultivate virtues  
They will become Buddhas  
And benefit the entire world

-Tantra bestowing the initiation of Vajrapani

When you recognize someone as the buddha you will not see faults in them and only pay attention to their good qualities. Likewise completely cast away your conception of faults in your guru, and train yourself to discern your guru's good qualities

Keep the masters good qualities in mind  
Never seize upon their faults  
Keeping their good qualities in mind you will reach attainments  
Seizing upon their faults you will not.

-Tantra bestowing the initiation of Vajrapani

If you examine your guru for their faults this will block your own attainments

Therefore once you have accepted someone as your guru, contemplate the disadvantages of examining their faults. Repeatedly think about the tendency and stop it. Take pains to confess it and restrain yourself from ever doing it again. Once you do this, the influence of that conception will gradually diminish.

Moreover pay attention to the good qualities your guru does have -- such as ethical discipline, learnedness, faith, etc -- and reflect on these qualities.

### **c. Remembering the teachers kindness and being respectful**

Develop the following idea with respect to your teachers. I have wandered for a long time through cyclic existence and they search for me, but I have been asleep. Having been obscured by delusion for a long time, and they wake me, pulling me out of the depths of the ocean of existence. I have entered a bad path, and they reveal the good path to me. They release me from being bound in the prison of existence. I have been worn out by illness for a long time, and they are my doctor; and they are the rain clouds that put out my blazing fire of attachment and the like.

- Teaching Sutra

Youthful Sudhana, the teachers are those who protect me from all miserable realms, they cause me to know the sameness of phenomena they show me the paths that lead to happiness; they instruct me in deeds always auspiciously they reveal to me the path to the city of omniscience; they cause me to enter the ocean of reality's sphere; they show me the sphere of past, present, and future phenomena; and they reveal to me the circle of the noble beings assembly. The teachers increase all my virtues. Remembering this you, will weep.

-Array of stalks sutra.

## Recollect your teacher kindness in accordance with this.

Of all personal instructions, 'Don't give up the excellent teacher' is the prime instruction.

-Dolwa

The excellent teacher is the source of all temporary happiness and certain goodness

## 2. How to rely in practice.

What need more is there to say here--  
Do whatever pleases your gurus;  
Eliminate all that displeases them.  
Analyzing this, strive at it.

Once you have understood Vajradahara's statement,  
'Attainments follow proper reliance on the master,'  
Thoroughly please your gurus in all ways.

Asvagosha's Fifty Verses on the Guru

In short, you must strive to do what pleases your gurus and eliminate what does not.

The 3 avenues to achieving what pleases your guru are:

### offering material gifts

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Offering to your pledge master constitutes  
Continuous offerings to all the Buddhas.  
Offering to them is the collection of merit;  
From the collections of merit and sublime wisdom comes the supreme attainment.

The student must do this offering because the gurus are the supreme field through which the student accumulate the collections of merit and sublime wisdom.

### respecting and serving with body and speech

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Physical actions such as bathing, massaging, cleaning dirt from the body, and nursing, as well as such vocal

actions as pointing out the guru's good qualities.

## practicing in accordance with their words

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This means to practice without contradicting what the guru instructs you to do.

The worship that you should do in return for my help  
Is to practice in accordance with my instructions

-Garland of Birth Stories

as for how long you should rely on a guru:

If you stay apart from your guru it is not beneficial. Therefore practice at a long time at a moderate distance

## Benefits of relying on a teacher

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1. you will become close to buddhahood
2. you will please the conquerors
3. You will not be bereft of future teachers
4. you will not fall into miserable realms
5. neither bad karma or afflictions will overpower you
6. you will accomplish your welfare as well as others
7. you will complete the collections of merit and wisdom

By respecting and serving your teachers you will exhaust bad karma that you would otherwise have to experience later on.

The benefits of respecting and serving your teachers are tremendous, such as the collection of virtue which surpasses even the roots of virtue that you derive from making offerings to limitless buddhas and so forth.

Those who respect and serve their gurus are endowed with unimaginable good qualities.

**Notice that all of the buddhas immeasurable good qualities of transforming others' minds arise from this proper reliance on the teacher. Therefore, rely on, become close to, serve, and venerate the guru, just as you would the buddha.**

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Any intelligent person should not be distant from excellent beings  
And should rely on these virtuous beings in a disciplined manner.  
Once you are close to them, particles of their good qualities  
Will stick to you automatically

-Garland of Birth Stories

## Faults of not relying on a teacher

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If you have taken someone as your teacher and your method of relying on them is wrong, not only will you be harmed by madness and sickness in this lifetime, but in future lifetimes as well you will experience misery in the lower realms for a long time.

Any of the unbearable hells  
Resulting from such bad karma as the deeds of immediate retribution  
They must stay there for limitless eons.  
Therefore never reproach your master on any occasion.

-Tantra Bestowing the Initiation of Vajrapani

All good qualities that have not yet developed will not develop and those that have developed will diminish then disappear.

## A summary of the meaning of the previous 5 parts

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Exert yourself in the practice of those teachings for which you are suited as a recipient, and repeatedly contemplate the complete qualifications of your teacher. Make many aspirational prayers and accumulate the collections of merit and wisdom as causes for having such a teacher to look after you until you attain enlightenment.