

A Gift of Liberation
Course Eight—The Beauty of a Teacher
Homework Master, Class Two: How to Make a Buddha Happy

1) The second traditional benefit of taking ourselves to our Lama in the proper way is that we thereby please each and every Buddha there is. According to the famous lam-rim text entitled *The Essence of Nectar*, why is this?

[According to this famous lam-rim, written about 200 years ago by a lama named Yeshe Tsundru, a person who takes themselves to their Teacher properly is quickly going to be freed from the cycle of pain. All the Buddhas are thus pleased with them, like a mother who is pleased that their one and only child is doing something that will bring them great benefit, rather than continuing on a path which will only continue to bring them incredible suffering—a change which the mother has devoted her life to, exclusively, for many years.]

2) There is an important quotation from *The Word of Gentle Voice*—which was written by His Holiness the Fifth Dalai Lama—that helps explain why, if we cannot behave with our Teacher in the proper way, it is of little use to make offerings to the Buddhas. Please give this quotation and clarify it, including an older source.

[Here is the quotation, which draws originally from a secret text by Lord Buddha known as *The Diamond Pavilion*. Lord Buddha, in his secret form, is speaking:

I come and enter the bodies
Of those who have made this their goal,
And accept the offerings made
By others on their journey.

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By pleasing this one, they themselves
Clean away their karmic obstacles.

The point is that—when you make an offering to your Teacher—you are in fact making an offering to every Buddha there is. If we fail to behave properly towards our Teacher and then try to follow the very important Buddhist practice of making offerings to the Enlightened Beings, then obviously these Buddhas will not feel pleased by these offerings, even though this is normally a very beautiful thing to do.]

3) Pabongka Rinpoche points out that there is an important and wonderful difference between making an offering to the Enlightened Beings in general, and making an offering to our own Teacher. Explain.

[The Rinpoche says that—when we make an offering—there are two important karmic seeds being planted. One is the seed that comes from our making the offering. But the other is the seed that comes from seeing directly how happy and pleased the person is to whom we made the offering.

In the case for example of making offerings on our altar at home, we plant the first kind of seeds—but we cannot observe directly the pleased reaction of the Enlightened Ones as they accept our gift. When however we make our presentation to our own Teacher, then we plant both the seeds of giving, and the seeds of seeing their reaction as they gracefully accept our gift. We double the power of our karma.]

4) It is said that, if we find and study with a spiritual Teacher properly, then automatically we are protected from negative forces and problems; and that our negative thoughts and behavior fade away on their own. Why, according to the Sutras, is this the case?

[First of all, serving our Teacher properly is the most powerful good karma that we can plant. With this kind of good karma, it is very difficult for negative forces and problems to touch us at all—we are protected from them.

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As far as our own negative thoughts and behavior, it is very similar to the case when we take formal vows, such as ordained vows or bodhisattva vows. When we get close to breaking them, we recall how the person who granted us the vows will feel if they hear that we have broken them, which causes us to restrain ourselves. This is even more powerful if we are living with or near this Lama!

The same is true with our control of our general behavior and emotions when we are serving our Teacher closely: we will be very hesitant to misbehave in their presence.]

5) Pabongka Rinpoche tells us several stories of disciples who served their Teachers, and as a result reached high levels of realization and became very famous teachers in their own right. What are two specific seeds which they planted?

[Very importantly, a disciple who assists their Teacher's teaching mission—a mission which results in many other people having realizations—plants a seed in their own mind to understand the deepest of teachings. They also plant a second seed: They will become great teachers themselves, and their teachings will spread widely. These are the karma of *enabling* the teachings.]

6) What is the most important karmic seed which is planted by serving our Teacher with devotion?

[By serving our Teacher with devotion, we plant a seed to continue to have spiritual Teachers, in all of our lifetimes, up to the day that we become enlightened ourselves. We rarely appreciate the importance of these Teachers; without them, we would very possibly go through life without any knowledge at all of the real causes of suffering and happiness, and spend a lifetime in increasing pain, with almost no meaning at all. A Teacher is everything.]

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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, think of someone whom you consider a close teacher. It could be a formal spiritual teacher, but it could also be a parent, a brother or sister, a school teacher, or a business mentor. Try to think about each of the 8 benefits that come from serving them in a beautiful way. Please write here the two times that you started these meditations.