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Today, the student-teacher relationship as understood and developed in the West needs re-examination. However, any approach at restructuring needs to avoid two extremes. The first is justifying the deification of the teacher to the point that it encourages a cult mentality and whitewashes abuse. The second is justifying the demonization of the teacher to the point that paranoia and distrust prevent the benefits to be gained from a healthy disciple-mentor relationship. In trying to prevent the first extreme, we need great care not to fall to the second.....

Learning a lesson from the faulty behaviour of one's mentor does not mean denying that the behaviour was faulty. If we find the fault unbearable, we may follow the advice of The Kalachakra Tantra and decide to keep a distance from the teacher. Nevertheless, a healthy attitude is to maintain respect for the person's good qualities.

Mingyur Rinpoche

When serious ethical violations occur, you are not bound to a quiet departure. Mingyur Rinpoche tells us:

"In that case, the violation of ethical norms needs to be addressed. If physical or sexual abuse has occurred, or there is financial impropriety or other breaches of ethics, it is in the best interest of the students, the community, and ultimately the teacher, to address the issues. Above all, if someone is being harmed, the safety of the victim comes first. This is not a Buddhist principle. This is a basic human value and should never be violated."

..... the results of genuine 'crazy wisdom' are always positive and visible. When a teacher uses an extreme approach that is rooted in compassion, the result is spiritual growth, not trauma. Trauma is a sure sign that the 'crazy wisdom' behaviour was missing the wisdom to see what would truly benefit the student, the compassion that puts the student's interest first, or both."

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

2018 ... some people think that following their teacher's instructions included allowing themselves to be abused. This is not the case at all! Marpa told Milarepa, "Do not treat your students like I treated you or the way the great Naropa treated me. Such practice should not be continued in the future." This is because it is very rare to find both a teacher and a disciple who have realizations comparable to those great masters.

I have had many teachers whom I value greatly, but I cannot accept seeing all their actions as perfect. When I was in my teens, my two regents fought each other in a power struggle that involved the Tibetan army. When I sat on my meditation seat, I felt both teachers were extremely kind and had profound respect for them; their disagreements did not matter. But when I had to deal with the difficulties caused by their dissension, I said to them, "What you are doing is wrong!" I did not speak out of hatred or disrespect, but because I love the Buddhadharm, and their actions went against it. I felt no conflict in loyalty by acting in this way. In our practice, we may view the guru's behaviour as that of a mahasiddha, but in the conventional world we follow the general Buddhist approach, and if a certain behaviour is harmful, we should say so.

The advice to see all the guru's actions as perfect is not meant for general practitioners. Because it is open to misunderstanding, it can easily become poison for both mentors and students. Students naively whitewashing a teacher's bad behaviour by thinking anything the guru does must be good gives some teachers a free hand to misbehave. On the teacher's part, poor behaviour is tantamount to drinking the hot molten iron of the hellish states, and it contributes to the degeneration of the Dharma in the world. Only in particular situations and to particular practitioners should it be taught that all the guru's actions are perfect. Buddhism is based on reasoning and wisdom and must remain so.

.....If you have taken someone as your spiritual mentor and discover he is engaged in some questionable behaviour, you may stop attending his teachings. Avoid disrespect or antipathy; anger will only make you miserable. The Kalachakra Tantra advises maintaining a neutral attitude and not pursuing the relationship any further.

....I would like to speak frankly to both spiritual mentors and Dharma students. From 2012-2015 I taught the eighteen Lamrim texts. Some of these texts emphasize that the guru is Vajradhara, and if you don't listen to your guru's instructions, you will be born as a hell being. What is all this about? The Buddha never said if you don't listen to his teachings and don't do as he says you will be reborn in hell! The Buddha said that we should not accept teachings with blind faith but through having investigated and analysed them. This is the true way to follow the Buddha's teachings.

1982: The yardstick must always be logical reasoning and Dharma reason. ...It is frequently said that the essence of the training in guru yoga is to cultivate the art of seeing everything the guru does as perfect. Personally, I myself do not like this to be taken too far. Often we see written in the scriptures "Every action seen as perfect". However, this phrase must be seen in the light of Buddha Shakyamuni's own words: "Accept my teachings only after examining them as an analyst buys gold. Accept nothing out of mere faith in me." 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...

The disciple must keep reason and knowledge of Dharma as principle guidelines. Without this approach, it is difficult to digest one's Dharma experiences. Make a thorough examination before accepting someone as a guru, and even then, follow that teacher within the conventions of reason as presented by the Buddha. The teachings on seeing the actions of the guru as perfect should largely be left for the practice of Highest Tantra, wherein they take on a new meaning. One of the principal yogas in the tantric vehicle is to see the world as a mandala of great bliss and to see oneself and all others as Buddhas. Under these circumstances it becomes absurd to think that you and everyone else are Buddhas, but your guru is not!

