

**E**ven if the guru, from his or her side, has many faults and few good qualities, the disciple has to look only at the guru's good qualities and not look at the faults. The disciple then gains the profit of all the realizations of the path to enlightenment. Even if

never at the good qualities. He saw Buddha only as a liar.

Lama Tsong Khapa explains two techniques for using the faults you see in the guru to develop your devotion. One technique is to think that the faults you see in the guru are simply the view of

your own impure mind; the other is to think that this aspect has been purposely manifested for your benefit, to guide you to enlightenment.

As mentioned in *The Essence of Nectar*, until your mind is separated from impure karma and obscurations, even if every single buddha without exception appeared directly in front of you, you wouldn't see them as Buddha; you would still have only your present ordinary view, which is the projection of your present ordinary, impure mind. When you see a fault in your guru, you should think that it is the view of your own impure mind. When you think in this way, seeing faults doesn't cause you to lose your devotion, the root of the path to enlightenment.

There are so many things that your mind cannot see or that it apprehends in a way that is opposite to reality. Besides the fact that you cannot judge anyone's level of realizations, you cannot even see the back of your own head. You do not have the power of mind to see even your own face without taking refuge in a mirror. And you cannot tell what is going to happen to you in the future, not even a moment from now.

You don't even see impermanent phenomena as impermanent, changing hour by hour, minute by minute, second by second. You apprehend them to be permanent. Also, you apprehend samsaric pleasure, which is only suffering in nature, as pure happiness. You regard this samsaric body, which is only suffering in nature and which contains many dirty substances, as pure and clean. And even though everything – including I, action,

## grappling with the guru principle

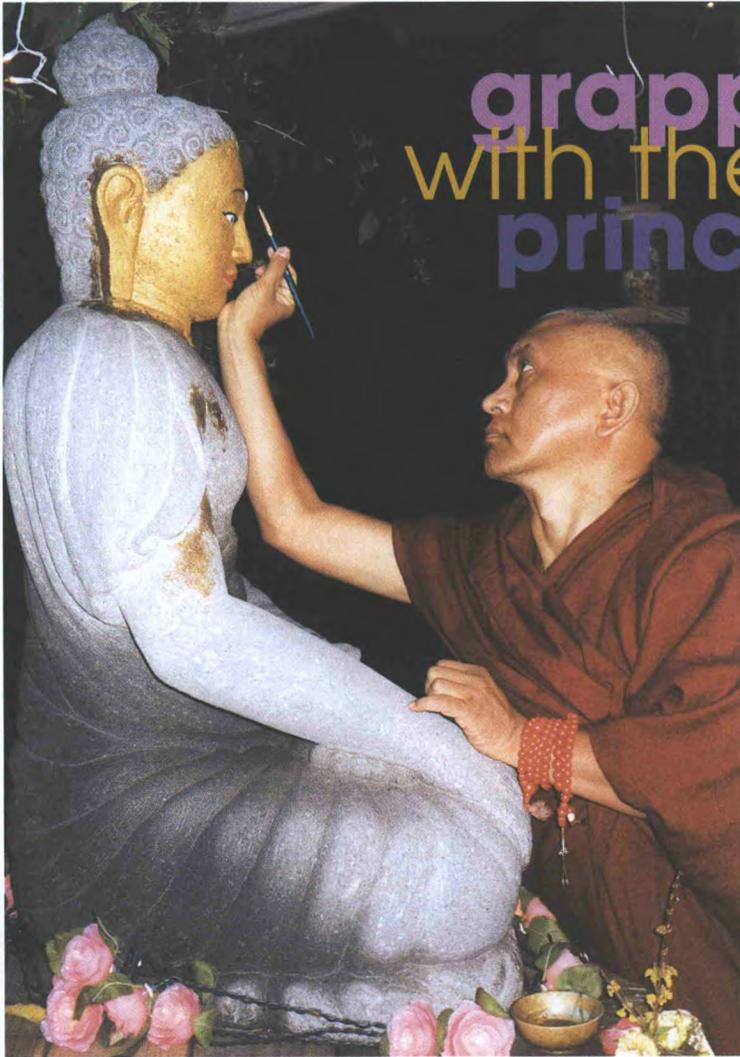


Photo Ven. Roger Kungtsang

the guru has more good qualities than faults, if the disciple only looks at the faults and not at the good qualities, they will see only faults. Take the example of the monk Lekpai

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Garma, who served Guru Shakyamuni Buddha for twenty-four years. During

all the time he was constantly with Buddha, Lekpai Garma didn't see any good qualities because he only looked at the faults and

object – is merely labeled by mind, you don't see it that way; everything appears to you to be only inherently existent. You continuously live with this wrong concept that everything is real, as it appears to be. As well as having many hallucinated views, you do not even see many aspects of reality.

The whole of existence is covered by Buddha. There is no place where there is no Buddha; there is no place that is not covered by Buddha's holy mind, as well as Buddha's holy body. There are numberless buddhas around you right now, but you don't see them. Why don't you see these numberless buddhas? Because your mind is obscured. Your impure karma blocks your seeing them. For a similar reason, you don't see your gurus as buddhas.

The *only* way the buddhas can guide you to enlightenment is by manifesting in ordinary forms, which means ones that have faults, experience the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness, and death, make mistakes in their actions, engage in negative karma. If the buddhas manifested in a form lower than the one you now see, such as in an animal form, it would be difficult for you to recognize, communicate with, or receive teachings from them.

Your mind is so deluded, or obscured, that you don't have the karma to see an aspect without faults. Your mind isn't pure enough to see any aspect that is purer than the one you see at the moment. Therefore, the buddhas have to manifest in ordinary aspects, which are defined as ones having faults, because there is no other way to guide you directly. They have to manifest as something that you can see, that accords precisely with your level of mind, so that they can give you direct guidance through teachings, advice, or other methods. This ordinary aspect is the only one that can give you direct guidance. Through communicating with you, it can prevent you from being born in the lower realms, liberate you from samsara and even lower nirvana, and, by liberating you from even subtle obscurations, lead you to enlightenment. This present ordinary aspect is the only one that can directly guide you to enlightenment.

This ordinary aspect becomes, therefore, the most precious in your life. Your present gurus are unimaginably kind to manifest in these ordinary forms, having faults, which accord exactly with the level of your impure mind. This ordinary form, which you can see and communicate with, suits your impure mind. It is only from this ordinary form that you can receive guidance in the form of vows, oral transmissions, commentaries, initiations, or personal instructions.

Manjushri, Tara, Maitreya Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, and all the rest of the numberless buddhas are working for you, guiding you, but you cannot see them in that form. How are they guiding you? The numberless past, present, and future

buddhas are guiding you through each of these aspects, which have delusions and suffering and make mistakes in their actions. In showing these ordinary aspects and bringing you to enlightenment, your gurus are unbelievably kind and precious.

Keep on developing the devotion that sees the guru as Buddha by looking at him as Buddha and the respect that comes through remembering the guru's kindness. The emphasis here is not so much on external respect as on respect from the heart. This meditation also becomes part of remembering the kindness of the guru.

With Lama Tsong Khapa's special technique, rather than making you lose your devotion, your seeing faults in the guru can become a powerful cause for developing guru devotion, the root of the path to enlightenment, and thus for achieving realizations of the path to enlightenment. It also causes you to remember the special kindness of your gurus, because without depending on these aspects, no buddhas can guide you to enlightenment. You then feel appreciation when you think of each guru's human aspect, even though it has faults. You then think, "In my life, this aspect is the most important and most precious one. It liberates me from the oceans of samsaric sufferings by enabling me to actualize the path and it liberates me from every single defilement, gross and subtle, and then enables me to complete the two types of merit. By doing this it leads me to full enlightenment, so that I am then able to enlighten numberless other sentient beings."

The conclusion is that your seeing the guru as ordinary does not mean that he or she is in fact ordinary. After extensive analysis, you determine, "This guru is Buddha." After transforming your mind into this guru devotion, you then keep your mind in fixed meditation on it for some time. If possible, you should do this in the morning when you meditate on *lam-rim*, then try to maintain the experience during the rest of the day. This is the best way to ensure quick and stable development of the guru devotion realization. ☸

This is an edited excerpt from two teachings given by Lama Zopa Rinpoche: one the Lama Tsong Khapa Guru Yoga commentary given at Jinsui Farlin in Taipei in June 1996; the other the motivation for the Most Secret Hayagriva initiation given in Sydney in March 2000. Edited by Ven. Ailsa Cameron.

