

FIFTY STANZAS OF GURU DEVOTION

Homage to the Bhagavan Vajrasattva.

Bowing in the proper way to the lotus feet of my spiritual teacher who is the cause for me to attain the state of a glorious Vajrasattva, I shall condense and explain in brief what has been said in many stainless tantric texts about whole-hearted commitment to a spiritual teacher. Listen with respect.

All the Buddhas residing in every land in the ten directions have prostrated three times (each day) to the tantric masters from whom they have received the highest empowerments. Is there need to mention that you should too?

Three times each day with supreme faith you must show the respect you have for your spiritual teacher who teaches you (the tantric path), by pressing your palms together, offering a mandala as well as flowers and prostrating (touching) your head to his feet.

Those who hold ordination vows, if (your spiritual teacher) is a layman or your junior, prostrate (in public) while facing such things as his scriptural texts in order to avoid worldly scorn. But in your mind (prostrate to your teacher).

As for serving (your teacher) and showing him respect, such as obeying what he says, standing up (when he comes) and showing him to his seat-these should be done even by those with ordination vows (whose teachers are layman or their juniors). But (in public) avoid prostrating and unorthodox actions (such as washing his feet).

In order for the words of honor of neither the spiritual teacher nor the disciple to degenerate, there must be a mutual examination beforehand (to determine if each can) brave a teacher –disciple relationship.

A disciple with sense should not accept as his spiritual teacher someone who lacks compassion or who is angersome, vicious or arrogant, possessive, undisciplined or boasts of his knowledge.

(A spiritual teacher should be) stable (in his actions), cultivated (in his speech), wise, patient and honest. He should neither conceal his short-comings nor pretend to possess qualities he lacks. He should be an expert in the meanings (of the tantra) and in its ritual procedures (of medicine and turning back obstacles). Also he should have loving compassion and a complete knowledge of the scriptures.

He should have full expertise in both (sets of) ten fields, skill in the drawing of mandalas, full knowledge of how to explain the tantra, supreme pure faith and his senses fully under control.

Having become the disciple of such a protecting (teacher), should you then despise him from your heart, you will reap continual suffering as if you had disparaged all the Buddhas.

If you are so foolish as to despise your teacher, you will contract contagious diseases and those caused by harmful spirits. You will die (a horrible death) caused by demons, plagues or poison.

You will be killed by (wicked) kings or fire, by poisonous snakes, water, witches or bandits, by harmful spirits or savages, and then be reborn in the hell.

Never disturb your teacher's mind. Should you be foolish and happen to do this, you will surely boil in a hell.

Whatever fearful hells have been taught, such as Avichi, the Hell of Uninterrupted Pain, it is clearly explained that those who disparage their teachers will have to remain there (a very long time).

Therefore exert yourself whole-heartedly, never to belittle you tantric master who makes no display of his great wisdom and virtues.

If (from a lack of awareness) you have shown disrespect to your spiritual teacher, reverently present an offering to him and seek his forgiveness. Then in the future such harm as plagues will not befall you.

It has been taught that for the teacher to whom you have pledged your word of honor (to visualize as one with your meditational deity), you should willingly sacrifice your wife, children and even your life, although these are not (easy) to give away. Is there need to mention your fleeting wealth?

(Such practice of offering) can confer even Buddhahood on a zealous (disciple) in his very lifetime, which otherwise might be difficult to attain even in countless millions of aeons.

Always keep your word of honor. Always make offerings to the Enlightened Ones. Always make offerings to also to

your spiritual teacher, for he is the same as all the Buddhas.

Those who wish (to attain) the inexhaustible (state of Buddha's Wisdom Body) should give to their teacher whatever they themselves find pleasing, from the most trifling objects to those of best quality.

Giving (to your teacher) is the same as making continual offerings to all the Buddhas. From such generosity much positive potential is gathered. From such collection comes the supreme actual attainment (of Buddhahood).

Therefore, a disciple with the good qualities of compassion, generosity, moral self-control and patience should never regard as different his spiritual teacher and the Buddha Vajradhara.

If you should never tread on even (your teacher's) shadow, because the fearsome consequences are the same as destroying a stupa, is there need to mention never stepping on or over his shoes or seat, (sitting in his place or riding) his mount?

(A disciple) having great sense should obey the words of his teacher joyfully and with enthusiasm. If you lack the knowledge or ability (to do what he says), explain in (polite) words why you cannot (comply)

It is from your spiritual teacher that actual attainments, higher rebirth and happiness come. Therefore make a whole-hearted effort never to transgress your teacher's advice.

(Guard) your teacher's belongings as you would your own life. Treat even your teacher's beloved (family) with the same

(respect you show) for him. (Have affectionate regard for) those closely around him as if they were your own dearest kin. Single-mindedly think (in this way) at all times.

Never sit on the (same) bed or seat (as your teacher), nor walk ahead of him. (At teachings do not) wear your hair in a top-knot, (a hat, shoes or any weapons. Never) touch a seat (before he sits down or if he happens to sit on the ground. Do not) place your hands (proudly) on your hips or wring them (before him).

Never sit or recline while your teacher is standing (nor lie while he is sitting). Always be ready to stand up and serve him skillfully in an excellent manner.

In the presence of your teacher never do such things as spit,(cough or sneeze without covering your head). Never stretch out your legs when at your seat, nor walk back and forth (without reason before him. And never) argue.

Never massage or rub your limbs. Do not sing, dance or play musical instruments (for other than religious purposes). And never chatter idly or speak in excess (or too loudly) within the range of (your teacher's) hearing.

(When your spiritual teacher enters the room) stand up from your seat and bow your head slightly. Sit (in his presence) respectfully. At night or at rivers or on dangerous paths, with (your teacher's) permission you may walk before him.

In the direct sight of his teacher, (a disciple) with sense should not (sit) with his body twisted around, nor leaning

(casually) against pillars and such. Never crack your knuckles, (play with your fingers or clean your nails).

When washing (your teacher's) feet or his body, drying, massaging or (shaving) him, precede such actions with (three) prostrations and at their conclusion do the same. Then attend (to yourself) as much as you like).

Should you need to address (your spiritual teacher) by his name, add the title "Your Presence" after it. To generate respect for him in others, further honorifics may also be used.

When asking for your teacher's advice, (first announce why you have come). With palms pressed together at your heart, listen to what tells you without (letting your mind) wander about. Then (when he has spoken) you should reply, "I shall do exactly as you have said."

After doing (what your teacher has told you), report (what has happened) in polite, gentle words. Should you laugh or cough, (clear your throat or yawn in his presence), cover your mouth with your hand.

If you wish to receive a certain teaching, request three times with your palms pressed together while kneeling before him on your (right) knee. (Then at his discourse) sit humbly with respect, wearing appropriate that is neat (and clean, without ornaments, jewellery or cosmetics).

Whatever you do to serve (your teacher) or show him respect should never be done with an arrogant mind. Instead, you should ever be like a newly-web bride, timid, bashful and very subdued.

In the presence of (the spiritual master) who teaches you (the path), stop acting in a conceited, coquettish manner. As for all other (improper) actions like these, examine them yourself and discard (what is wrong).

If you are (requested) to perform a consecration, (an initiation into) a mandala or a fire offering ceremony or to gather disciples and deliver a discourse, you may not do so if your spiritual teacher resides in that area, unless you receive his prior permission.

Whatever offerings you receive from performing such rites as (the consecration known as) Opening the Eyes, you should present all these to your spiritual teacher. Once he has taken a token portion, you may use the rest for whatever you like.

In the presence of his teacher a disciple should not act (as a spiritual teacher) to his own disciples and they should not act towards him as their spiritual teacher. Therefore (before your own teacher) stop (your disciples) from showing you respect such as rising (when you come) and making prostrations.

Whenever you make an offering to your teacher or whenever your teacher presents you with something, a disciple with sense will (present and) receive this using both hands and his head slightly bent.

Be diligent in all your actions, (alert and) mindful never to forget (your word to honor). If fellow-disciples transgress, correct each other in a friendly manner.

If you because of sickness you are physically (unable) to bow to your teacher and must do what normally would be prohibited, even without (his explicit) permission, there will be no unfortunate consequences if you have a virtuous mind.

What need is there to say much more. Do whatever pleases your teacher and avoid doing anything he would not like. Be diligent in both of these.

“Actual attainments follow from (doing what) your teacher (likes).” This has been said by (the Buddha) Vajradhara himself. Knowing this, try to please your spiritual teacher fully with all the actions (of your body, speech and mind).

After a disciple has taken refuge in the Triple Gem and developed a pure (Enlightened Motive), he should be given this (text) to recite daily (how to abandon his own arrogant self-will and) follow in his teacher’s footsteps (along the graded path to Enlightenment).

(By studying the prerequisite training in a whole-hearted commitment to a teacher and the graded path, common to both sutra and tantra), you will become a (suitable) vessel (to hold) the pure Dharma. You may then be given such teachings as tantra. After receiving the proper empowerments, read out loud the fourteen root vows and take them sincerely to heart.

As I have not made the mistake when writing this work (of adding my personal interpretations), may this be of infinite benefit to all disciples who would follow their teachers. By

the limitless positive potential I have built up in this way,
may all sentient beings quickly attain to the state of
Buddha.