



## *Advice From Lama Zopa Rinpoche* **On Guru Devotion**

*A woman who came to visit Rinpoche had been living in a place where many teachers from different lineages and traditions came to give teachings and initiations, and where quite a few students had the habit of going to receive initiations whenever they were offered. During the visit she mentioned that she did not wish to do that, and commented that it gave her a headache to have to manage and keep straight all the different teachers and one's connection with them. Some time after she left, Rinpoche composed this letter for her.*

There is another important piece of advice that I thought of telling you some weeks ago, in regards to taking teachings and initiations from a lama in a guru and disciple relationship. This is the most crucial thing, so one has to be most careful on this point. It's important, because if you are not careful, you can create huge negative karma with the guru. This negative karma comes from non-devotional thoughts, from disturbing the holy mind, from harming the holy body, and from disregarding the advice of the guru. These heavy actions create great obstacles to happiness in this life, the next life, up to liberation from samsara and the peerless happiness of enlightenment. This is the greatest obstacle to having realizations on the path to enlightenment, besides causing intense suffering in the lower realms for an immense length of time.

Looking at it generally, the guru can be perfect, but the disciple may still be unable to devote him or herself.

There can also be an imperfect guru, misleading the disciple. In my case, the gurus are perfect. If I cannot devote myself correctly, that is my own problem. It is not the mistake of my gurus.

Therefore, I suggest to you, in regards to lamas you connect with to receive an initiation or teachings, certainly you should make a connection with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He is Compassion Buddha in human form. There can also be other lamas who are your gurus, but there's no rush. So, you can attend His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings and his initiations.

It is good the way you have been thinking, trying to protect yourself and not just listening to anyone who says to come and listen to different lamas' teachings and initiations, making a guru-disciple connection. You said that you didn't want any "headaches." Already many people have had such headaches, taking teachings and initiations from this lama and that lama. Worse, after having headaches, there is the danger of giving up the guru as well as one's faith in the Dharma. That behavior leads to the heaviest hell realm, therefore it is something to be abandoned, even at the risk of your life. Just losing this life doesn't necessarily mean you are

reborn in the lower realms. You can still have a good rebirth, and even be born in the pure realms.

So, your term "headache" is perfect. There is the danger of getting involved in many things when one makes a connection by taking teachings and initiations from any lama one hears about. Then, you really do get many headaches, and so much confusion. For us ordinary beings, it becomes very complicated when we don't know how to handle these situations. Many people I meet have gone through these problems. You can study the teachings on guru devotion.

However, if you don't recognize yourself as a disciple and that person as the teacher or guru, just being present in the teaching does not mean that you are making a guru-disciple connection, even if you listen to the teachings. Likewise, even if you are present at the initiation, if you don't do the visualization and have no recognition that you are the disciple and that person is the guru, you are not taking the initiation and are not making the guru-disciple connection. ☸