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The Guru Disciple Relationship in Vajrayana Tradition: A Sacred Path to Enlightenment

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ABSTRACT

The guru-disciple relationship holds profound significance within Buddhism, encompassing a unique bond of spiritual guidance and transformative learning. Rooted in the teachings of the Buddha, this relationship serves as a vital conduit for transmitting wisdom, fostering personal growth, and nurturing the path to enlightenment. This paper explores the importance of the relationship between the Guru and disciples in the Vajrayana tradition. These research findings indicate that Guru is the guide and the initiator or an ignitor for the disciples guided by compassion and wisdom, serving as a spiritual mentor, providing instruction, guidance, and personal example. Further, research reflects that in the Vajrayana tradition, Guru initiates the disciples by giving oral commitments before certain following practices to lead all other beings to the path towards enlightenment. It examines the emergence of the guru as a revered spiritual teacher, possessing deep insight and direct experiential knowledge of the Dharma. By researching the importance of the Guru and disciples' relationship in the Vajrayana tradition, without the qualified masters, with the uninterrupted transmission of Vajrayana teaching and blessings, the disciples cannot freely initiate the Vajra Dharma practices. Vajrayana tradition transmission occurs through the continuous lineage of the Guru. Thus, to attain the ultimate stage of realization in Vajrayana practice, this research reflects that one should rely on the Guru to empower the transmission of profound spiritual teachings and Vajra practices.

Keywords: Vajrayana, Dharma, transmission, uninterrupted lineage, enlightenment

1. INTRODUCTION

Vajrayana Buddhism may be a sort of Buddhism that possibly all started from the Mahayana tradition. It depends on an intricate philosophical and ritual organism design to illuminate illumination, and sometimes it is also known as Tibetan Buddhism.

Vajrayana generally means the way of the diamond. Vajra refers to the diamond-hard thunderbolt, and Yana refers to the path, or the spiritual vehicle, to achieve illumination (Ray, 2017). Vajrayana Buddhism developed in India around the 6th or 7th century CE. Tantric ideas started to be consolidated into the

teachings of Buddhist universities in northern India, slowly prompting the advancement of a new tradition (Gyatso, 2017).

It spread from India into the Himalayas, arriving in Tibet in 747 CE by Padmasambhava or Guru Rinpoche. In Tibet, this developed and turned into the predominant type of Buddhism and spread to other neighboring countries like China, Mongolia, and Japan (Gyatso, 2017). Vajrayana Buddhism recommends that it give us a quicker path towards enlightenment, Lowering the want to come upon several existing instances before arriving at the stage of enlightenment and being practiced by each individual (Gyatso, 2017).

For the most part, Vajrayana Buddhism is complete with symbolism and rites focused on searching for enlightenment. The rituals are regular meditation incorporating tantric practices, combining the physical and spiritual worlds, which the Guru can only guide appropriately. In the Vajrayana tradition, without the proper guidance of the Guru, one cannot practice or initiate the dharma practices. Thus, even if one had the proper guidance and got the vows of practice from the Guru, one should not miss the practices which one should practice daily after getting the Vajra practice and need to uphold the strong and positive bond with the Guru (Khandro Dechen, Ngakpa Chogyam, 2003)

The guru-disciple relationship holds profound significance within the Vajrayana tradition of Buddhism, serving as a central pillar for spiritual guidance, empowerment, and transformative awakening. This paper explores the unique dynamics, principles, and spiritual implications of the guru-disciple relationship in the Vajrayana tradition, shedding light on its essential role in the path to enlightenment. Rooted in the Mahayana teachings, Vajrayana places great emphasis on the relationship between a realized guru, known as a spiritual master, and a dedicated disciple seeking

spiritual progress. The guru, regarded as an embodiment of wisdom, compassion, and enlightened qualities, becomes the guiding light for the disciple's spiritual journey.

Furthermore, the paper explores the sacred rituals and empowerments that take place within the guru-disciple relationship. Initiations, or empowerments, enable the disciple to receive blessings, transmissions, and transformative practices directly from the guru. These empowerments establish a spiritual bond and empower the disciple to engage in advanced practices leading to awakening and realization.

Therefore, this paper indicated that in the Vajrayana tradition, it is crucial to uphold the relationship in the proper direction with certain Samayas between the Guru and disciples to have the appropriate practices of the Vajra Dharma. The paper highlights the guru-disciple relationship as a sacred and transformative bond within the Vajrayana tradition. It underscores the unique role of the guru as a spiritual guide, transmitting wisdom, blessings, and empowerment to the dedicated disciple. By cultivating devotion, trust, and ethical commitments, the guru-disciple relationship becomes a profound vehicle for spiritual growth, empowerment, and the realization of enlightened wisdom in Vajrayana Buddhism.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Vajrayana tradition is the foundation of Theravada and Mahayana traditions, emphasizing no longer hurting others instead of helping other beings with the central ideas of keeping the external phenomena of the perceiver and object voidness upon the utilization of effective techniques of meditation, creation, and completion. The Vajrayana tradition considers that all external phenomenon is naturally uncontaminated. It is the only non-consciousness of this uncontaminated condition for ordinary beings like us. When the mind is

impure, all appearances of the external phenomena are the samsara. When the mind is pure, all the external phenomenal appearances are nirvana (Tsongkhapa, 2005).

The methods or skillful means of the Vajrayana tradition is to transform our impure mind into pure by choosing a qualified and uninterrupted lineage master to guide us in the proper way of our practices. A vajra master must have generated bodhicitta in aspiration and bodhicitta in action (Rinpoche K., 2002). Setting up a disciple-Guru relationship is a vital step for the initiates of Buddhist practice. Our precious time is wasted if we are led off course by improperly taking someone as a master. To encounter the dharma within this short period is difficult; experiencing a truly qualified vajra master is more complex; to follow the vajra master and adequately practice the dharma afterward is extremely difficult. As we can see, one may also face mounting problems in seeking genuine dharma. Nevertheless, if one desires to learn the Buddha dharma, one must understand the proper teachings and correct the right path with the right Master. The stanza requirement of the Vajra master is as:

"Since it is the time of declining dharma and sentient beings have scarcely sufficient merit accumulated, finding an ideal vajra master like the Buddha or an incredible bodhisattva is amazingly troublesome." He said, "Simply leave this elevated expectation for the present and see the less stringent requirements a vajra master must fulfill." The Master should keep unadulterated the pratimoksha, bodhisattva, and Vajrayana vows (Lingpa, 1930-1998).

To choose the qualified and uninterrupted Master, disciples should consider three fundamental characteristics of our Master and four for the disciple. The qualified Master should have great information on the three-vehicle Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana

Buddhism. For Vajrayana practices, the Master should obtain some empowerment and transmissions with completed a few practices (Rinpoche D. J., 2012).

The Master has extraordinary empathy, no matter whether nearby a good-sized gathering or in a bit of accumulating; Simultaneously, the Master instructs, it is far regularly with the inspiration of assisting the disciples in the direction towards enlightenment. Moreover, with the stimulated sympathy and to profit the disciples to understand the dharma, the Vajra master should often remember never to seek the disciples' interest. Finally, the instructions must no longer have a few different features than handling the followers in the inner direction (Khandro Dechen, Ngakpa Chogyam, 2003).

The four characteristics that disciples should possess are:

1. The disciple must have entire and changeless confidence and agree with the Master and the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.
2. To use the guidelines and orders obtained from the Master, disciples should always need terrific persistence.
3. In the Vajrayana, even more significantly, the follower should adjust without doubting the word from the Master. Suppose one eventually doubts the master's abilities or conduct. In that case, it is fundamental to believe that this abandonment is a point of fact not inside the Master but in our specific way of seeing.
4. One who has got an oral transmission from the Master and later loses faith and breaks the vajra Samayas, it is essential to avoid negative thoughts and judgments. In Vajrayana practices, even if one received the word of teachings from the Guru and broke the Samayas, one will be reborn as a dog five

hundred times and later to miserable human life (Rinpoche K. T., 2019).

Indeed, In Vajrayana practices, Guru represents the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, where the inner awakened mind of the Guru represents the Buddha, the Speech as the dharma, and the body as the sangha. Thus, the speech of the Guru even represents the dharma protector dakinis. The mind of the Master is Yidam, the deity. Therefore, when one perceives and prays to the Master as the union of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha with the complete devotion depth of the individual heart, power, and grace will clean off one's ignorance, conflicting emotions, and emotions, faults, and veils. Therefore, the Guru is a higher priority than the Buddha for the disciples in the Vajrayana tradition (Rinpoche, 1998).

In Vajrayana practices, to attain the path of awakening, it is said that it takes longer if we rely on our practices upon the Buddhas. Perhaps if one chooses the Guru and practices per the proper guidelines, it is always a quicker path to the awakening stages of accomplishments. Thus, it is essential to have a Vajra master in any Vajrayana practices, and offerings to the Vajra master are superlatively adequate for accumulating individual merits and wisdom (Rinpoche K. T., 2019).

When we practice Buddhism, incredible attention is to have a continuous transmission of teachings and blessings through uninterrupted lineage between Guru and disciple, which will accomplish the incomparable realization of knowledge on the nature of the mind to the external reality. Thus, it is said that the possibility of a disciple achieving Buddhahood could never happen if one did not have a root guru to guide one to have an ultimate realization. Along these lines, in many cases, the part of the Master or Guru is essential, as it does not just convey the actual teachings yet additionally the

fundamental favors to refine the obscuration and empower the disciples, at last, to consolidate our mind with the realized mind of the Guru. In Vajrayana practices, one of the significant parts is to keep the Samaya vows (Dorji D. J., 1904-1987). There are fourteen roots downfall of Samayas in Vajrayana to follow and stay clean always. (*Tib rtsa ltung bcu bzhi*)

1. Not respecting the Vajra master
2. Disobeying the Buddha's word
3. Quarreling or insult among Vajra disciple's brothers and sisters
4. Deserting the love and affection to sentient beings
5. Deserting bodhicitta aspiration
6. Disapproving the sutras and tantra teachings
7. Telling the secrets to unworthy people
8. Mistreating one's body.
9. Not believing in the emptiness
10. Accompanying bad friends
11. Fail to realize emptiness.
12. Disappointing the faith in teachings
13. Fail the Samaya commitments to observe.
14. Assaulting the women

As in Vajrayana practice, we cannot isolate ourselves ourselves from keeping away our Samaya vows. The commitment and support help to avoid falling into conventional thoughts and judgments. It is also a reminder and supports us to be vital to help us to safeguard our commitments. The overall idea is that we train our minds to realize non-duality. Tantra offers us the most effective method of accomplishing non-duality through the practices of pure perception. We essentialize these practices by keeping a new perception of our Guru. The advantages are limitless and are not accessible without a guru in the ordinary. Child-like beings are unequipped for continuing even dubiously similar ways as the ideal way by their personalities, so they need first to look at and follow a qualified guru. Guru is the root that makes us accurately participate in

the entire Buddha dharma, particularly following appropriately. Gurus are the learned and experienced guides for unpracticed travelers like setting out on an excursion, a fantastic direction for the individuals heading out to dangerous spots, like a boater controlling the boat for individuals crossing a waterway. Without them, nothing is possible to reference the perpetual sacred texts (Rinpoche H. H., 2019).

The importance of the Guru and disciples' relationship in the Vajrayana tradition relates to Milarepa's life with his true root guru Marpa in western Tibet. At seven years old, Milarepa's father died, and he had a tough childhood life as his relatives took over his father's assets and abused the deprived family. His mother sent Milarepa to educate him in black magic to take revenge on those relatives, and Milarepa proved this by distracting and killing many lives.

However, Milarepa later regrets his destructive activities. He searched for help to clean off his bad karma, which he had obtained at a young age. So Milarepa decided to be the disciple of Marpa. Marpa, aware that Milarepa needs to clean off his negative karma, his Guru Marpa had asked Milarepa to construct the rock tower with his barehanded. Milarepa constructed the towers with his bare hands with complete determination yet was destroyed by his root Guru Marpa repeatedly. However, the Milarepa, with his firm decision, did not break the Samaya with his root guru. Instead, he made a repeated attempt to fulfill the words of his Guru.

At last, after seeing Milarepa as the genuine disciple of his Guru, Marpa gave complete transmissions of all the Mahamudra teachings to Milarepa. With the whole Samaya, Milarepa practiced these teachings for a long time and accomplished enlightenment. Thus, we can see how the relationship between the disciple and Guru is essential to practice the true dharma, even how hard the

Guru treats Milarepa. Still, the actual relationship of Guru and disciple had never broken from the Milarepa. Thus, it finally develops a strong bond of trust between Guru and disciple, which shows the disciple to transcend the practices and attain full enlightenment within one lifetime (Dorji H. H., 2007). As a result, the connection between Guru Marpa and Milarepa is highly revered and held up as the epitome of the Guru-disciple relationship.

Thus, in any discourse, without having depended on a true guru, the attainment of enlightenment is impossible. Therefore, having offered service by satisfying the Guru and keeping Samaya's requirements without permitting them to be disregarded, our Guru's mind of wisdom and conduct is presented to disciples. Thus, letting our minds and behavior become apparent on the path of enlightenment (Rinpoche L. Z., 2009). Therefore, keeping a genuine bond between Guru and disciple in Vajrayana practices with unbroken Samaya vows is the main focal idea for upholding the spirits of dharma teachings and practices. However, the role of the Guru is primary, as it does carry not only the actual teaching but also the necessary blessings to purify the obscuration of the disciples and enable them to ultimately merge their minds with the realized mind of the Guru (Mata, 1970)

Subsequently, there is no possible spiritual accomplishment transmission without an actual relationship between the root guru and disciples, as mentioned in Vinaya, Bodhisattva, and Tantrayana in the Vajrayana tradition. It also derives from the above that there is no Buddha's name in the Vajrayana tradition without a Guru. Therefore, even the Buddha of the Past, Present, and future had sought a spiritual Guru (Thangka, 2022). In the Vajrayana tradition, our root Guru may not say much, but his presence firmly motivates us to spontaneously integrate Buddha dharma into our life, and so Guru helps us to

comprehend the nature of our mind and all things. We must understand that our root Guru is the realized one who can introduce us to the nature of our mind.

As a result, strong Vows must be generated, devotion based on the faith that the Guru's presence and inspiration may assist alter all mental negativities and liberate one's mind. This is why, in Vajrayana practices, consciousness and insight develop and evolve because of Guru's inspiration and presence (Tenpel, 2013). Thus, it concludes that in the Vajrayana tradition, the Guru-disciple relationship is very important because even in the highest Yoga tantra practices in Guru Yoga, the entire Yoga is dedicated to one's relationship with the Guru and that emphasized the strong bond of Guru-disciple relationship in Vajrayana tradition a sacred path to the enlightenment.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Vajrayana tradition, also known as Tantric or Esoteric Buddhism, is a prominent branch of Buddhism that emphasizes the transformative power of rituals, meditation, and mantra recitation. Within the Vajrayana tradition, the relationship between a guru (spiritual teacher) and a disciple (student) plays a significant role in the transmission of teachings, empowerment, and spiritual guidance (Rinpoche K., 2002).

This paper followed the document analysis approaches with a systematic examination and interpretation of written or recorded materials to extract meaningful insights and information from a wide range of textual sources, through content analysis, thematic analysis of literature related to the concepts of the Guru and the disciple relationship in the Vajrayana tradition. While document analysis is not the primary method used in this paper to explore the guru-disciple relationship, there are some textual sources such as Tantras and Scriptures, Guru Yoga, Biographies and Hagiographies of renowned Vajra masters, and Lineage Texts of

Vajrayana lineages of Kagyu, Nyingma, Sakya, or Gelug, lineage texts that trace the transmission of teachings from one guru to the next are explored to gain the insights of the study. With this availability of written sources, and to fulfill the purpose of the study, this study adopted the document analysis approaches.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the Vajrayana tradition, this paper indicated that the Master should have obtained scripture empowerment and transmissions (Rinpoche K., 2002). Vajrayana master must have completed at least a few practices to empower the disciples. The disciple must have entire and changeless confidence and agree with the Master and the Buddha, Dharma, and the Sangha. In the Vajrayana tradition, even a single word of teaching given to us are the master infused with threefold kindness (Rinpochee, 1998).

Thus, the paper concluded that without relying upon the Master, there is no way to attain the path of enlightenment in Vajrayana practices. Even the Buddha of the Past, Present, and future had sought a spiritual master. Therefore, the Master is the essential guide and initiator, and we can pray to them to initiate us toward the path of enlightenment. The paper also indicated that in Vajrayana practices, the strong bond of trust between the Master and disciples would lead the disciples to full transcendence towards the direction of enlightenment within one lifetime, which is the shortest way of practice in Vajrayana tradition. It is always good to uphold the right and keep the proper bond between Vajra Master and disciples in the Vajrayana tradition (Termatree, 2022)

The research findings indicated that the Guru or Master in Vajrayana practices is equal to all the Buddhas. Making our connection with our Guru, whether through seeing, hearing a voice, remembering, or being touched by his hand, will lead us toward the path of

enlightenment. To have complete confidence in Guru is the only way towards the progressing path of enlightenment in Vajrayana practices. The blessing of wisdom and compassion of our Vajra master will melt the core of our beings and can release the gold of Buddha nature within us and it's fundamental to all schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

The life story of Shakyamuni Buddha embarks the evidence of the Guru-disciple tradition. When he left the palace and wandered to places in search of truth, he was attached to different types of teachers and mastered various meditative and yogic disciplines (Thangka, 2022).

According to Vajrayana tradition, the Guru is necessary for progress on the path to Buddhahood. He is the highest being in the Tantric practices and the source of all blessings, initiations, and teachings. Together, the Guru and disciple begin a deep psychological, emotional, and spiritual relationship. A disciple will naturally be drawn toward a teacher since it is said that the connection is predetermined by karma. The guru fully accepts responsibility for overseeing the instruction and overall development of the disciples. He encourages and allows students to visualize deities and supports meditation. (Rinpoche L. Z., 2009).

The idea of someone attaining Buddhahood is thought to have never emerged if that person did not have a teacher or Master acting as a guide to take him to the ultimate level of realization. The Vajrayana path is fundamentally based on a relationship with a guru, often known as a spiritual mentor. The entrance to Dharma's practices and teachings has been maintained clearly by a continuous line those dates to the Buddha (Rinpochee, 1998).

It is the continual transmission of spiritual teachings from teachers to students, beginning with the Buddha himself teaching his students, then they continuing to

teach their disciples, until finally, we are today learning the same spiritual teachings, and that Vajrayana guru lies the very core of the Vajrayana path and therefore unbreakable bond of Guru and disciple is highly valued in Vajrayana tradition, as the transmission comes from Guru and disciple transcend the cycle of suffering and delusion and gain the highest level of realization of the pure nature of mind and reality (Wallance, 2015).

5. CONCLUSION

Thus, it is considered that if a person did not have a teacher or Guru to assist him to the ultimate level of realization, the notion of that person achieving Buddhahood would never develop. it concludes that in the Vajrayana tradition, the Guru-disciple relationship is very important because even in the highest Yoga tantra practices in Guru Yoga, the entire Yoga is dedicated to one's relationship with the Guru, and that emphasized the strong bond of Guru-disciple relationship in Vajrayana tradition a sacred path to the enlightenment.

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