



## **Seeking A Spiritual Master**

The root of the spiritual path, according to Buddhism, is the student's reliance upon the spiritual master, or guru. It is not sufficient to learn only from books, rather one should search for a spiritual teacher from whom to learn. Learning from a living master carries more energy, because whatever he or she teaches comes from personal experience. Now the question arises: How does one go about searching for a spiritual master and what qualities should one look for? The spiritual master must meet the following five qualifications that distinguish him or her from an ordinary teacher:

- His or her behavior must be subdued by ethical discipline. He or she must live according to his/her teaching and encourage others to live in this way.
- His or her mind must be completely pacified and calm due to meditation practice.
- He or she must have profound wisdom, which includes deep levels of understanding of emptiness.
- He or she must be a skillful speaker who has great compassion.
- He or she must teach with no expectation of gaining material rewards and teach with no desire for power, acclaim, or reputation.
- He or she must have abandoned all doubts regarding the teaching and have full conviction.

Once we have found a teacher who meets these qualifications, we can follow him or her with assurance. But finding such a person is not enough if the student doesn't meet the following five qualifications, to become a spiritual disciple. (The hook only works when there is a loop!)

- He or she must be sincerely open to the teachings.
- He or she must have some intellectual capacity to discern whether or not the teaching is wholesome or unwholesome and see the meaning behind the words.
- He or she must have a deep, consistent interest in order to put the teachings into practice throughout his/her life.
- He or she must have deep respect for the spiritual master, feeling joy in his or her presence.
- He or she must have sound motivation and intention when listening to the Dharma teaching which is purely to reach enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. He or she should not have the intention of gaining personal power, gaining new knowledge in order to write a book, make a living, or become famous.

When a spiritual master who meets these five requirements and a disciple with these five qualifications come together, it is like a hook meeting with a loop, they work together. This is the first step in moving towards higher spiritual realization. I suggest that those who are sincerely interested try to follow a spiritual master with these five qualifications or at least one who lives according to his or her teaching.