
The Reasons for Developing Virtuous Personalities

B4: Encourage to Develop Virtuous Personalities

C1: The Reasons for Developing Virtuous Personalities

*Always comply with your friends in word and deed
Be a person of integrity filled with kindheartedness.
In order to benefit yourselves in the long term,
the pith instruction is to benefit others at the present moment.*

a. The Importance of Virtuous Personalities

What virtuous personality entails is that we must always be compliant with our family members and friends in what we say and do; that we need to be persons of integrity filled with kind-heartedness; and that if we wish to benefit ourselves in the long run, the pith is to benefit others in the present moment.

Dharma practice requires a virtuous personality, this is the essential teaching summarized by His Holiness through many years of his teaching. His Holiness required that anyone who studies at Larung Gar must follow three rules, which are 1) to cultivate a virtuous personality; 2) to uphold the pure precepts; 3) to listen, reflect, and meditate on the Dharma teaching.

Regardless of whether one studies the Mahayana or Vajrayana teachings, it is imperative that one has a virtuous personality; otherwise, making any progress in one's Dharma practice becomes impossible. Ju Mipham Rinpoche says in *The Words on the Mundane and Transmundane Codes*,

*Worldly rules are the foundation of buddhadharma,
if one does not act nobly in the world,
one will never grasp the supreme principle of buddhadharma,
Not mention to achieve enlightenment.*

b. What are Virtuous Personalities?

In this verse His Holiness identified the following standards for a virtuous personality and expected us to remember them well.

"Always comply with your friends in word and deed." We must always get along peacefully with our family members and friends regardless of their age and status. From a worldly perspective, a person with good characteristics is respectful to those of higher status, compassionate to the less privileged, and gets along harmoniously with those who are their equals.

There is a metaphor in the Tibetan region: "When one hundred yaks are all climbing uphill, the Gaba (the dregs, the inferior type of yak) run downhill." This is a very vivid illustration. A man who has a negative personality is always clashing with others in his behavior. People all feel relieved when someone like this leaves. It is like having a pterygium removed from one's eye; their departure is reason for celebration.

As the Buddha says, “I shall comply with worldly people.” If the Buddha behaves in this way, we ordinary human beings must surely do the same. Of course, compliance does not mean being without principles. Compliance does not mean that one should comply with other’s greed or hatred. We comply with deeds that are rational and in accordance with the Dharma, and in this way, we get along harmoniously with everyone.

“*Be a person of integrity.*” Whatever we say and do, we must be fair-minded, honest and impartial. We must be free of self-attachment and aversion to others. Additionally, we must never place ourselves in a dominant position, nor judge things unfairly. We must abide by the truth and be impartial. Hence, it is imperative to be a person of integrity. Then, no matter how we have been misunderstood or defamed, we will never really be harmed. Our kind and honest nature will shine like pure gold, and not be tarnished by hindrances or darkness.

“*With kindheartedness*”, if someone appears to have integrity and seems to be willing to comply with other people, but is vicious in mind, then this person’s moral quality is questionable. The mind is the root of everything. Lama Tsongkhapa once said,

*If the intention is good, the levels and paths are good.
If the intention is bad, the levels and paths are bad.
Since everything depends on intentions,
Always make sure they are positive.*

If one is kind-hearted, everything will be bright; but if one does not set his or her heart aright, one will only be moving towards darkness.

These three principles of being a decent person are of great importance. His Holiness further pointed out that if we would like to benefit ourselves in the long run, being of benefit to other people in the moment, is a very effective pith. As ordinary human beings, it is impractical never to think of our own well-being, but if we harm those around us in the process of pursuing our own goals, we will not prevail. It may sound like a form of cunning, to help others for the sake of our own benefit, and truly, it is better not to have such thoughts. However, if you really cannot arouse a truly altruistic mind, you should at least try to be kinder to other people for your own advantage and survival.

His Holiness once said jokingly, “After so many years of life experience, I have noticed that many people have very little worldly wisdom. They are selfishly only trying to benefit themselves, even though this is not necessarily a good strategy. For example, a young person loves someone, and tries everything possible to possess the other party by restricting their freedom. The result is often counterproductive. Someone else may take a different approach by wholeheartedly supporting and helping the person they love. By doing so, they are likely to be accepted by their lovers. When we study buddhadharma, if we do not realize how important a virtuous personality is, and do not try to cultivate good characteristics, we will not be able to reach any state of enlightenment in our practice.”

The Merit of Maintaining Virtuous Personality

C2: The Merit of Maintaining Virtuous Personality

*These are the pure standards for being a good person,
And the skillful means of all buddhas of the past, present and future,
Also the essence of the four dharmas of attraction,
Each of you, my disciples, should never, never forget!*

a. The Merit of Maintaining Virtuous Personality

From a secular and purely ethical perspective, possessing a virtuous personality is seen as synonymous with being a good person. From the perspective of seeking enlightenment, it is the most skillful means to achieving Buddhahood for all Buddhas of the past, present, and future. It is also the essence of the four dharmas of attraction that Bodhisattvas follow. All Buddhists should keep this in mind and never forget.

Virtuous personalities are “*pure standards for being a good person*”, the basic principles that govern the life of a decent human being. During Buddhism’s prime period in Tibetan history, Emperor Songtsän Gampo set up the *Sixteen Guidelines*¹ for being a good person, which included developing devotion for the Three Jewels; seeking out and practicing the sacred Dharma; repaying the kindness of one’s parents; being honest, having little jealousy and so on.

Virtuous personalities are not only required as a rule for a worldly life, but even more so, a guideline for an enlightened life. In fact, it is the path of the most “*skillful means*” to attain Buddhahood for all Buddhas of the past, present, and future. Regardless of which Buddha we are referring to, he must have been a good person during the causal stage.

Even if we put aside the accomplishments of their realization and enlightenment, we can also easily tell that truly enlightened masters are extremely attractive in terms of their personal charisma. Khenpo Sodargye said during his teaching, “I have followed and relied upon many great spiritual teachers in my life, and the appeal of their words and deeds exceeds ordinary people’s imagination. These great teachers, as a result of their virtuous personalities, have reached a unique state beyond the secular world.”

Virtuous personalities are also “*the essence of the four dharmas of attraction*”², which include: (1) giving what others like, in order to lead them to love and receive the truth; (2) speaking gentle words, with the same purpose; (3) giving benefit to others, with the same purpose; (4) cooperating with and adapting oneself to others, to lead them into the truth. These are the four major missions of bodhisattvas to benefit sentient beings. These all must be built upon a virtuous personality. With a virtuous personality, one is willing to give, to speak pleasing words, to benefit others, and to cooperate with and adapt oneself to others, in order to lead them to enlightenment.

b. The Heart Advice of His Holiness

Because of the reasons given above, His Holiness offered this heart advice: “For those of my students who have faith in me, you must always remember to be persons of virtue, now and in the future. If you cannot be a good person, all your other cultivations are like trees

¹ http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Sixteen_pure_human_laws

² http://rywiki.tsadra.org/index.php/four_means_of_attraction

without roots and will never grow and flourish.”

In the past, the esteemed Kadampa masters would first observe a student’s personality before admitting them as a disciple. If the student was not a decent person, the masters would not accept him as a disciple nor pass on the Dharma lineage to them. On the other hand, if a student was a good person but not very smart, the masters would still expect him to be a good student. Therefore, virtuous personality, rather than intelligence is the critical element here. A good person is not necessarily of solemn appearance, with a beautiful voice, and elegant manners; but they must be kind-hearted.

It is not unusual for people to have disagreements on some trivial issues. Even some bhikkhus or bhikkhunis in the sanghas around the Buddha experienced these kinds of problems. But overall, no matter which school is followed, either from a Mahayana or Vajrayana background, the sangha needs to remain as a congenial community and to have a harmonious and cohesive atmosphere. As Khenpo Sodargye says, “This is also a manifestation of a virtuous personality.”

In summary, His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche addressed four major piths in this text, which are the non-dual wisdom in the context of Mahayana and Vajrayana teachings, Bodhichitta, renunciation, and virtuous personality. These four piths are the essence of all 84,000 Dharma teachings being summarized through his theoretical study and personal realization. Each of us must keep them firmly in mind.

Dedicate

A3: Ending

B1: Dedicate

*I dedicate this virtue to all sentient beings,
May they transcend the abyss of samsara.
May all my heart disciples be joyful
And take rebirth in the western pure land of ultimate bliss.*

The merits and virtuous roots resulting from the composing of this treatise are transferred to all sentient beings who have been our mothers. May they transcend the horrifying abyss of the six realms of samsara. In the meantime, the essence of the 84,000 dharma methods is summed up in the four piths instructions addressed above; may great bliss arises in the hearts and minds of those with faith in His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche and in Buddhism. May all sentient beings, with auspicious affinity, be reborn in the western pure land, attain ultimate peace and happiness, and benefit immeasurable sentient beings in the future.

The Background of Composing the Song

B2: The Background of Composing the Song

In the seventeenth cycle of the Tibetan calendar and the year of the fire rat, the teacher and the disciples had overcome all the external, internal, and secret hindrances. On this auspicious day, Ngawang Lodro Tsungmed celebrated the victory, and sang extemporaneously among the almost five thousand monastic persons, Sādhu!

There are sixty years in a full cycle of the Tibetan calendar. The chronological record of Tibetan history began in 1027 AD. The year when His Holiness composed the *Song of Victory* was in the seventeenth cycle of the Tibetan calendar in the year of the fire rat, (September 21st, 1996). As mentioned earlier, this was when His Holiness returned to the monastery after overcoming all external, internal and tantric hindrances, and had a joyous reunion with all of his disciples. The monastery arranged a Vajra Entertainment Dharma Assembly for this special occasion, during which the entire narrative of His Holiness' illness and recovery was performed, including some dohas originally sung by Venerable Dromtonpa and Ju Mipham Rinpoche as a blessing to His Holiness.

Ngawang Lodro Tsungmed is His Holiness' Dharma name. He sang the *Song of Victory* extemporaneously surrounded by almost five thousand monastic persons, Sādhu! Sādhu!