
Verse 6: View Those Who Harm Me as Spiritual Teachers

*Even when someone I have helped,
Or in whom I have placed great hopes
Mistreats me very unjustly,
I will view that person as a true spiritual teacher.*

When someone that I have benefited, or helped, or in whom I have placed great concerns and hopes, mistreats me in extraordinarily unjust ways, I will sincerely regard that person as my true spiritual teacher, without the least bit of resentment.

a. Cherish the opportunity to practice patience

Every one of us might run into a situation like this: someone that we have helped with manpower or money, or have assisted with the study and practice of Buddha-dharma, and in whom we have placed great hopes, does not react to us with gratitude, but instead harms us in various unjust ways. In Mipham Rinpoche's *The White Lotus: The Great Biography of Shakyamuni Buddha*, there are many these kind of stories that in his causal stages, the Buddha had saved someone with the risk of losing his own life, but that person did not react to him with gratitude, but instead did terrible harm to him. Given these situations, the Buddha practiced patience and perfected this paramita.

Similar cases have become ubiquitous in the current society. What attitudes should we take towards such people? We should regard them as true spiritual teachers, no different from our vajra guru, and we should seize every one of these opportunities to practice patience. This is genuine Dharma practice!

To most people, this is something very difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, we still need to reflect the benefits of being patient, and put it into practice as much as we can; if we give rise to anger in such situations, then all of our practice is nothing more than a sham! As is mentioned in *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*:

*Even if one I've lovingly cared for like my own child
Regards me as an enemy,
To love him even more,
As a mother loves a sick child, is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

These are the fundamental attitudes that we should fully hold towards Dharma practice. When others harm you for no reason at all, not only are you not provoked, but you also generate great compassion towards them; you dedicate all your merits to them and view them as spiritual teachers – that is the way of a real practitioner. If you gnash your teeth with hatred and boil over with rage toward someone who has taken your belongings, that is not the way of a true practitioner, and is an even further deviation from the path of a Bodhisattva.

b. A story of Khenpo Sodargye

To view those who harm us, as being no different from our own guru is something very difficult to do. Khenpo Sodargye shared his story during his teaching:

Several years ago, I brought back a statue of Manjushri from India, but unfortunately, the statue was stolen by someone who knew me very well. Since my childhood, I have always had a tremendous faith in Manjushri. What's more, it had taken a lot of trouble to get the statue through customs. Therefore, I had made up my mind to enshrine this sacred statue as my field of refuge, to which I could, with great care, make offerings. That statue had supreme blessing powers, and I would not have sold it even if someone had offered me millions of RMB—I am so attached to Manjushri!

Later, when the stewards heard that it had been stolen, they asked me whether I would like to have the theft investigated, or whether I would like to seek help from the police. I knew who had stolen it, so if I had sought help from the police, it would not have been difficult to get the statue back. However, at that time, I thought: “If we make enquiries, everyone will know who is the one who stole the statue. Buddha statues were meant to benefit beings, but if this would arouse the afflictions of the thief, I'd rather give the statue to him as a present, even if I was the only one that knew about it. In the end, this seemed like the best opportunity for me to practice patience.” So, I declined the kind offer of the stewards, and the whole thing was thus settled.