



Name: _____

Date: _____

Grade: _____

TEACHER TRAINING: PART I (Fall Term)

ANSWER KEY FOR CLASS SIX

- 1) What are the three ways -- characterized by Pabongka Rinpoche as the “lesser,” “intermediate,” and “supreme” methods – of serving the spiritual teacher according to the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras*?

”Serve a spiritual friend with honor and material things, by attending him, and also by your practice.”

- 2) What is the best way of performing “guru yoga” according to Pabongka Rinpoche?

Serving the teacher properly every day through the three methods above. If we are able to do that, Pabongka Rinpoche says “we need not look for any other meditation object in order to practice guru yoga.”

- 3) And of all the ways to please your spiritual teacher, which is the highest?

“To follow his instructions exactly and then offer our practice as a form of worship.”

- 4) Why, according to Alexander Berzin, should we train ourselves to focus on what appears to us as our spiritual teacher’s good points, and not what appears to us as his or her faults?

Because one of the purposes of guru yoga is to gain inspiration for our own practice through thinking about the spiritual teacher. Inspiration can only come from focusing on positive qualities; dwelling on the teacher’s apparent faults can only anger, sadden, or disillusion us.



- 5) In order to focus on the good qualities of our spiritual teacher, we need first of all to *recognize* them. To do this, we must have the *belief* that they are really there (sometimes called “*faith*”). What is Master Asanga’s definition of what it means to believe in something?

The definition of “believing” is “the constructive mental action of focusing on something existent and knowable, and considering it either existent or true, or considering a fact about it true.” Further, believing a fact occurs only while validly cognizing it and implies certitude, and specifically excludes presumption or blind faith.

- 6) Master Asanga also says there are three ways of believing a fact to be true. Name these three ways and then discuss them in relation to how one gains a belief in the spiritual teacher’s good qualities.

1) “Clearheadedly.” Having examined the teacher’s behavior and character, we focus on the good qualities while believing clearheadedly that the teacher actually has them. “The more we focus on the qualities and clearheadedly believe them to be a fact, the more we cleanse our minds of disturbing emotions and attitudes towards our mentors, such as arrogance or doubts about the person.” 2) “Based on reason.” We then recall what “having good qualities” means – the bringing of one’s good potentialities into actualization through the process of behavioral cause and effect. “Our mentors have become qualified spiritual teachers as the result of intensively training in Dharma.” 3) “With aspiration.” We then focus on these good qualities of our teacher while believing that these qualities are something that we too are able to attain if we exert the effort, which “serves as the basis for positive enthusiasm to attain the same good qualities our mentors have.”

- 7) Explain the place of “values” or “honor” (a.k.a. “consideration”), on the one hand, and “scruples” or “shame” on the other in the relationship one has with one’s spiritual teacher.

“Values,” “honor,” or “consideration” is a kind of justifiable pride in our own capabilities of attaining the good qualities we see in our teachers for ourselves; it is “a sense of values that include appreciation and esteem for positive qualities and for persons possessing them.” “Scruples” or “shame” keeps us from acting in ways that would disgrace, embarrass, or disappoint our teachers and others we most respect.



- 8) In the meditation on the guru, what occurs after one has focused on the actual good qualities of the teacher?

The mental action of “appreciating” or “focusing with continual mindfulness on our mentors’ kindness. . . valuing it with a sense of awe.” Appreciation also entails profound respect and intense love, based on admiration and respect.

- 9) Discuss the final step in the meditation on the guru.

The final step is to request inspiration from the teacher and try to feel as though one has indeed received it. This involves both the request or prayer, and the total openness to receive what one wishes to obtain.

- 10) Alexander Berzin writes that a “healthy relationship with a spiritual mentor grows from the bedrock of trust and respect,” and from these latter two comes the wish to serve that teacher with one’s actions. Review the three ways of serving one’s teacher in action and say a few words about what each of them really entails.

First, one should offer one’s teacher material support. This means to support the teacher’s work financially and materially as “a natural outgrowth and practical expression of appreciation, respect, confidence, and trust in the person and in his or her efforts.” Second, one should serve the teacher by offering help and showing respect (“serving and honoring”). This means to help them with their tasks and show respect and courtesy for them in the ways appropriate to one’s culture and time. Third, and most importantly, one should follow one’s teacher’s advice to the best of one’s ability. This means seeking out teacher’s advice “only concerning important matters that would affect our spiritual development and practice,” and not for trivial things. It does not mean that one gives over responsibility for oneself to the teacher. Rather one listens to the advice of one’s teacher with *discriminating awareness*. This can mean discriminating between what one is capable of doing now and what is presently beyond one’s means. It also means never doing what one knows to be contradicting the Dharma.