

The Spiritual Teacher

from Sandra Bishop

In the Tibetan tradition the spiritual teacher is sometimes referred to as more precious than the Buddha, because the teacher is the one who connects us to our Buddha nature.

It is sometimes said that we may have the great good karma to meet a teacher who is an authentic lineage master. It is also said that it is up to each of us to create the karma through our conduct and actions to receive the teachings and attain some level of realization.

We are so fortunate here in Eugene to have a new Nyingma Tibetan center with visiting teachers and a resident lama. One of the three founding lamas, Lama Gyaltsen from Corvallis, offers teachings once a month on Saturday afternoon. Lama Tashi, the resident lama currently living in Eugene, is usually at the center every day doing practice and teaching.

In the Tibetan Nyingma tradition:

It is said the GROUND is the Buddha nature.
A wonderful SUPPORT is this precious human life,
And wonderful CIRCUMSTANCE is meeting the master,
And the METHOD is following the instructions that he gives you.

It is often said in Tibetan teachings that no one ever attained enlightenment without following a spiritual master. In this day and age we have libraries full of books on the dharma and spiritual practices. We have quick access through the Internet to online courses and teachings from great masters and self-professed teachers at all levels of spiritual mastery. But there is nothing that can take the place of direct interaction with an authentic spiritual master.

At the Saraha Center we have the wonderful advantage of having a highly trained and profoundly realized Tibetan teacher in Lama Tashi Deleg. Lama Tashi is the resident Nyingma lama for Eugene and the Saraha Nyingma Buddhist Institute. He is at Saraha almost every day. He teaches Tibetan language five times a week. He leads a short practice centered around Dudjom Tersar Ngondro almost every day. After evening practice Lama Tashi sometimes gives short teachings. It is when he speaks of the details of the rich Tibetan dharmic tradition such as the interconnection between emptiness and impermanence that one realizes the depth of his knowledge and realization.

It is said in the Tibetan teachings that a spiritual teacher or companion (sometimes called a “spiritual friend”) is our true guide to liberation and omniscience.

In the Tibetan tradition we are advised to:

Exam the teacher,

Follow the teacher and
Emulate the teacher's realization and their actions.

As we become more familiar with Lama Tashi's teachings and his wonderful sense of humor and spaciousness, it is good to reflect on our good fortune to have him here at the Saraha center in Eugene to carry on the teachings of Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche.

We all have the **GROUND**; the basic Buddha nature. We all have the **SUPPORT** of a precious human body, at least at this time. And most of us have the wonderful **CIRCUMSTANCE** of having met some of the great lamas and masters.

Even with all these wonderful advantages, in our daily lives we are easily influenced and distracted by the people and circumstances around us. There is no better time to develop the **METHOD**. We may not always have access to such well-qualified spiritual guidance. Now is the time to refine our spiritual stability and steadfastness. I'm grateful to have the opportunity to study and practice with, and receive teachings from Lama Tashi, one of the last remaining authentic lineage holders in the Nyingma tradition of Tibet.