

*Characteristics of those unsuitable to be gurus*

The third verse of the Initiations chapter says:

Proud, ruled by anger, and lacking vows,  
greedy, without knowledge, working to deceive disciples,  
a mind that has fallen from great bliss,  
without initiation, totally attached to wealth,  
unaware, of harsh and coarse words, filled with carnal desire,  
the wise disciples should abandon taking such people  
as causes of complete enlightenment  
as they would abandon hell.

People with such faults are not fit to be relied upon as gurus in the Vajra Vehicle. Even if one takes such a person as a guru and requests initiations and so forth, there can be no meaningful receiving of the initiation. Moreover one will become infected by a measure of his faults and fall from all elevated status in this and future lives. Most of the above verse is easy to understand. “Without knowledge” means to be without the essential teachings on the six-branched yoga, for example. “Working to deceive his disciple” means to delude disciples by telling lies. “A mind that has fallen from the great bliss, without initiation” means that without having received the initiation he is bestowing, he nevertheless teaches it to others. “Filled with carnal desire” means working only for the pleasure gained from the sexual union of the two organs.

Therefore the way to rely upon a guru is firstly to know the characteristics worthy and unworthy of devotion and then to examine thoroughly who is and who is not fit to be a guru. The *Great Commentary* says on the second verse of the Initiations chapter:

Disciples who wish to gain worldly and nonworldly powers by way of mantra should first devote themselves to a guru. Furthermore one should examine the vajra master thoroughly. One should thoroughly examine his words. Otherwise, relying upon a guru unexamined, the disciples’ dharma will be perverse, and perverse dharma will send them to hell.

Also the *Paramarthaseva* says:

He, omniscient in the complete Vajra Vehicle,  
has said that very wished-for siddhi follows the master.  
If perfect disciples examine the master, therefore, as they would gold,  
they will not accrue even the tiniest of faults.

However what should one do if one already regards as a guru someone endowed with those unworthy characteristics? The *Great Commentary* says:

In mantra, even though one has taken as a guru a person with the faults of pride and so forth, wise disciples, meaning those of intelligence, will abandon him as a cause of complete enlightenment as they would abandon hell.

Also:

Because of these words, even though he has been taken as a guru, if he does these wrong deeds, disciples who strive for freedom should leave him.

A passage quoted in the *Great Commentary* says:

Without compassion, angry and malicious,  
arrogant, grasping, uncontrolled, and boastful,  
the intelligent disciple will not take such a one as guru.

Therefore, if one has taken someone with these faults as a guru, then the disciple who is seeking freedom should part company with him and not associate with him again. These quotes from the *Great Commentary* teach just this point and this point only. They do not teach that one should lose one's faith due to seeing faults because, as it is so rightly said:

Once that is used as a reason and one casts off the undertaking of holding him as a guru and as a field of reverence, one opens up the opportunity for a root downfall to occur. One must learn, therefore, to distinguish what is to be developed from what is to be discarded.

Some explain the two instances of the phrase "taken as a guru" in the two *Great Commentary* passages above as applying to gurus taken by others.

What should one do if a qualified lama with all characteristics cannot be found? The *Paramarthaseva* says:

In these troubled times  
faults and good qualities in gurus are mixed.  
None are completely without fault.  
The disciples will come to rely upon  
those discovered, after careful examination,  
to have a predominance of good qualities.

As this quote says, even if one is unable to find someone possessed of all the worthy characteristics of a lama, one should rely upon those whose good qualities predominate. In particular, it is essential that they have received the complete initiation, hold the tantric vows, and are wise in the rituals of initiation.