

The Teacher-Student Relationship in the Pristine Awareness Sangha

In the Pristine Awareness Sangha we make a clear distinction between Gurus and Dharma Teachers. Gurus are the focus of devotion. In the Pristine Awareness practice mandala, the gurus are Kyabje Togden Amtrin, Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche (Jigdral Yeshe Dorje), Shakyamuni Buddha, Prahevajra (Garab Dorje), Padmasambhava, and Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal. Teachers are those qualified and capable of guiding students in Buddhist practice. The Pristine Awareness teachers are Lama Dudjom Pema Düddul and Rigdzin Jamyang Tenphel.

Lama Pema and Jamyang-la do not consider anyone a student of theirs, even if they are in our programs, unless that person has made a written request to them and asked them to take on the role of teacher and that request has been accepted. If the prospective student agrees to the following Lama Pema and Jamyang-la are happy to accept them.

These are Lama Pema and Jamyang-la' expectations:

1. We are not fully-awakened beings and so do not expect you to see us that way. We are not infallible and so we encourage you to think critically about any advice we give. That being said, we have a lot of practice experience behind us, and the blessings of our Lamas, all of which we are happy to share with you. The lineage we hold comes from perfectly enlightened beings and we only share what they have given us, so the practices and teachings we give have an enlightened source.
2. We only give advice on practice and Buddha Dharma. All questions about The Path of Joy and Ease and sky-gazing are to go to Jamyang-la. Questions about Guru Yoga can go to either Jamyang-la or Lama Pema. All other questions about Dharma in general, or about our other practices, are to go to Lama Pema. For personal matters and anything to do with your private life, we advise you to speak to friends and family or seek appropriate professional advice. This does not mean we do not care about what is happening to you in your health or relationships. We simply are Dharma teachers, not doctors, counsellors or therapists, and so cannot offer advice on this front.
3. Once you have asked us a Dharma question, we request that you do your best to apply our advice. We ask that you apply that advice for a decent period of time before coming back seeking further advice on the same issue. We also ask that you not go to other teachers with the *same* question; essentially shopping around until you get an answer you like more. This leads to confusion.
4. Jamyang-la regularly goes into periods of more strict retreat where he does not communicate at all. Questions for him will need to be funnelled through Lama Pema (pema.duddul@outlook.com). Even so, if you have specific questions for Jamyang-la that are pressing note the urgency and he will reply (through Pema).
5. We request those who consider us their teachers to do their best to hold all five of the Upasika/Upasaka vows for life. If this is a challenge, you can take your time to ease into them. They are an awareness practice, not a set of rules. The five precepts are: To abstain from harming or killing any breathing beings; To abstain from taking what is not freely given (theft, fraud); To abstain from sexual misconduct (rape, sexual assault, promiscuity etc.); To abstain from false or divisive speech (lies, slander, gossip, boasting); To abstain from intoxication from alcoholic drink or drugs that cause heedlessness.

6. We expect those who consider us their teachers to abide by the Pristine Awareness code of conduct, which is based on the five Buddhist precepts. The Code of Conduct can be found on this [webpage](#).
7. We expect those who consider us to be their teachers to practice simply yet diligently (within their capacity), with a specific focus on the Joy Practice, Sky-Gazing and Guru Yoga. We also ask that their engagement with the Dharma be through practice, through the heart, rather than through the intellect (through study and discussion/debate).
8. We ask that those who consider us to be their teachers refrain from polarised Dharma debates, especially on social media, and not get involved in sectarianism or disparagement of other authentic Dharma communities, or legitimate teachers.
9. We ask that those who consider us to be their teachers refrain from engaging with teachers or communities proven to be corrupt or abusive.
10. We expect you to treat yourself with kindness, compassion and fairness. Take proper care of your health, wellbeing and practice. Your body and wellbeing is the vehicle that will carry you to liberation, so it must be looked after. Likewise we hope that you will treat your Dharma siblings, and all fellow practitioners, with kindness.
11. Finally, we would like to make a personal request that those who consider us to be their teachers become vegetarian for at least a few days each week, with a view to becoming completely vegetarian in the future. We also request that you cease to wear leather, silk, bone, and pearls. The Buddha asked his followers not to wear leather or use bone. This tradition of kindness has been encoded in the rules for monks and nuns, the *Vinaya*, which clearly states that the wearing or use of leather and bone are prohibited. These things are the simplest and most effortless ways to directly save sentient beings from misery and terror, and is the most basic expression of kindness and compassion toward others.

The following is Lama Pema and Jamyang-la's promise to their students:

- If the above are acceptable to you then we commit wholeheartedly for this life and all future lives to be your spiritual friends and guides in the Dharma. We will do whatever we can to support you to awaken to your ultimate nature and find total liberation from suffering. We promise to treat you with respect and kindness and will always have your spiritual wellbeing in the forefront of our minds.