
We should also consider what it is in a person that we should befriend. We should be friends with that person's positive qualities, in the sense that we should try to emulate those qualities. On the other hand, we should not be influenced by their negative side. As said before, the person you befriend will have both faults and good qualities. Because you spend a lot of time around your friend, you have to try and learn their good qualities, and try not to pick up their bad ones. Then, whether you spend your entire life with that person or not, your time with them will have benefited you.

If you do not do this, they could adversely influence you. For example, if your friend has a short temper, you could become the same as that person after being with them for a while, even if you had been different beforehand. If your friend has a habit of speaking harshly or using swear words, you could also become like that.

It is also important that you try, as much as possible, to develop loving kindness and a compassionate attitude towards your friend. This compassionate attitude should be the reason that you feel close to your friend, the reason to love them. On the other hand, you should reduce strong, desirous, emotional attachment. Emotionally, you can become so attached to a person that your joy and happiness will depend on them, and you have a strong desire for them.

In most cases, a relationship starts with two people strongly desiring each other. For the relationship to last, however, instead of increasing your desire, you have to replace it with more love, more mutual benefit, support, and care for each other. The true meaning of being friends is to help and support each other in times of need – when the other person is unhappy or experiencing stress from work or some other cause.

When everything is fine, neither of you will need help from each other. But one of the major causes of problems in relationships is that we are not able to support our friends in times of need. Instead of supporting them, we simply feel threatened. For example, when a friend comes home or comes to you with a problem, you feel that your inner peace and happiness is threatened. When they get angry, you feel you cannot accept it, so you get annoyed and also get angry, not helping your friend at all. Furthermore, you blame the problem onto your friend's angry nature, which is not an honest response.

Essentially, the practice of the law of karma is about being honest with other human beings, honest with your friends. If you are honest, just as you see problems of anger and so on in your friend, you will see the same problems within yourself. It is not right to speak openly about the problems of others if you have problems yourself. Normally, it is hard for us to recognise our own faults. But if we could recognise all our faults, we could understand other beings better.

Geshe Doga says that whenever people ask him about choosing a friend, like a boyfriend or girlfriend, he may tell them to go with that man or woman. But he also tells them that whether or not the relationship will last depends entirely on them. He is not able to tell them whether the decision is good or bad, but he does advise

them to consider it from their own side.

The next two lines say:

We are filled with desire for food and fine clothing,
Yet failing to earn them we steal and we scheme.

This is saying that we enjoy finding excellent food, clothing, power and so forth. However, we do not create the respective causes, particularly the internal causes of gathering merit from making offerings to the Three Jewels, or giving charity to the poor, etc. In fact, we do the contrary, like stealing things that belong to others. Even if we do not do that, our strong desires are never fulfilled, and we are kept busy with unfinished work. On top of this, as said in the two earlier lines on developing new friends, we are quick to make friends and quick to lose them. The text says that all this is caused by the self-cherishing mind within us. The root text goes on (note – 'him' refers to the self-cherishing mind):

Trample him, trample him, dance on the head
Of this treacherous concept of selfish concern.
Tear out the heart of this self-centred butcher
Who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

Once again, we will adopt the meditation posture, calm the mind and body, and chant the Buddha's mantra, making sure that the mind is single-pointedly focused on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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