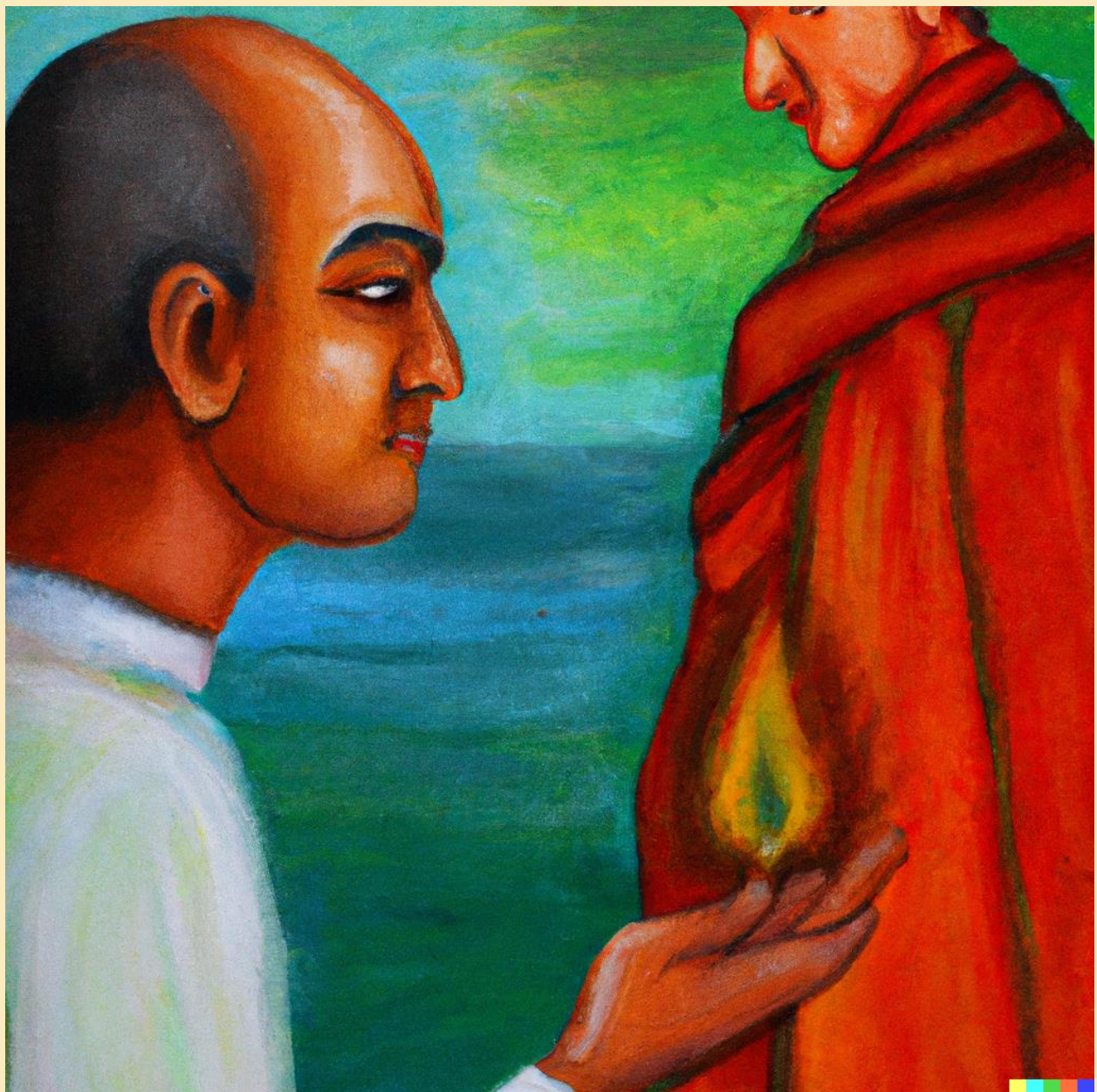


**Debate Haus**  
**Nalanda Debaters' Network**  
**2023 Lam Rim-Themed Debates**  
**May – Relying on a Spiritual Friend**



*The kind and venerable spiritual mentor is the foundation of all good qualities. Seeing that dependence on him or her is the root of the path, I request inspiration to rely on him or her with great respect and continuous effort.*

- *“The Foundation of All Good Qualities” by Je Tsongkhapa*

**1. Teachers come into our lives when we attend school, and also when we embark on a spiritual path or learn a religious practice. But what other kinds of teachers are there? Do we learn certain skills or knowledge from people who aren't formal teachers?**

☞| **It follows that you can posit the difference of joints between:**

- a) teacher and family member**
- b) teacher and stranger**
- c) teacher and bad guy/enemy**
- d) teacher and someone who's no longer alive during your lifetime**
- e) teacher and an AI/computer/machine**

**2. If there are so many different kinds of teachers, and so many ways someone can be a teacher, how can we define what a teacher is? Can it be internal or must it be an external person?**

☞| **Posit the definition of a teacher.**

**3. “Geshe” is a Tibetan word for a spiritual teacher that literally translates as “virtuous friend.” What kind of friend is a virtuous friend?**

☞ | **Posit the difference between friend and virtuous friend (3 Joints, 4 Joints, Equivalence, or Contradiction).**

4. The purpose of a Spiritual Friend is to show one the methods to improve one's good qualities, eliminate delusions and ignorance, and ultimately achieve full awakening. Yet, the Lam Rim Chen Mo reports that it is reasonable to rely on a person with only one of the 10 qualifications of Spiritual Friend, if that's the best you can find. One of these qualities is true love and concern for the student.

☞ | **It follows if someone has love and concern for their students, they are necessarily a qualified spiritual teacher?**

5. One reflection to help internalize a positive attitude towards a Spiritual Friend is thinking about the kindness they've shown towards you. But does there actually exist any living being who has not shown you kindness?

☞ | **Posit the difference between a living being and someone who has shown you kindness.**

Also, is it a requirement to receive kindness from something that it has a motivation to be kind? Then...

☞| **Take the subject: the Dharma (Or food, a cool breeze on a hot day, etc). It follows that you have not received kindness from it, because it does not have a motivation to be kind.**

**6. Relying on a Spiritual Friend involves taking seriously another person's advice, even if it runs contrary to your own plans or perspectives. This involves issues of autonomy, independence, trust, and authority. But what kind of autonomy or independence do we assume we should have?**

☞| **It follows that you can posit the definition of independence, as used in the statement, "I'm going to do what I like, because I'm independent!"**

**Likewise, is it reasonable to place your trust in an authority just by virtue of their authority?**

☞| **It follows that if someone is a authority, they are necessarily trustworthy.**