

## CHAPTER 9 – AVOID TAKING WHAT IS NOT GIVEN

Eight-year old Garchen Rinpoche had to give up the freedom and pleasures he had when living in Dong-go drong, like being able to roam around the village, playing and roughhousing with the other young boys, and sleeping when he wanted to. Now that he was living at the monastery, his only indulgence was eating anything that had a sweet taste. He always loved anything that tasted sweet. Rural Tibetans didn't eat many sweets, and their desserts are not very sweet like in other countries. So when there was anything at the monastery that tasted sweet, the young Garchen Rinpoche would try to eat his fill of it.



When his father observed him devouring sweets, he would firmly forbid him from eating any more. His father and mother were concerned about him eating all those sweets. They knew it wasn't healthy to eat many sweets, and they had to protect their little son from overindulging in them.

But the desserts made Garchen Rinpoche's mouth water, and if he just ate one, he still felt hungry. Those sweets were exactly what would make his hunger go away. He didn't want to just drink more butter tea or eat more rice. So, somehow he managed to eat more sweets anyway, when his father wasn't looking. He wasn't satisfied with eating just one or two. He would finish off the whole plate, and all the crumbs too!

After his mother served their meals, sometimes there was dessert. After Garchen Rinpoche ate one piece, he watched carefully for an opportunity to take another piece, when his parents weren't

looking. His mother hoped he wouldn't take any more, because if his father caught him having taken another piece, he might hit him with the cane!

Not only did the little tulku try to finish off as many sweets as he could, he also still craved his mother's face cream.



That sugary honey cream, it was even more delicious than food! His mother had it in her room at the monastery. On rare occasions, Garchen Rinpoche could go to his mother's room, and when she was busy, he was tempted to have just one little taste of her face cream. But usually he took more than just one little taste! He tried not to eat all of it. He wanted to make sure his father didn't find out. He sure didn't want to be beaten with the cane by his father.

But Garchen Rinpoche got punished anyway, by the results of his own karma of sneaking sweets when his parents weren't looking -- taking what he was not allowed to take.

One day, the inside of his ear felt hot and uncomfortable, and he couldn't hear well from it. He got a fever and felt weak and sick, with chills. Soon his ear began to hurt, a lot. He was miserable until someone brought some medicine to the monastery to cure his ear infection.

Some months later, he noticed that one of his teeth hurt whenever he ate something sweet or cold. The pain got worse as weeks went by, and soon it hurt to eat anything at all. Because of all the sweets he ate, that tooth had a big cavity, so it was extremely painful whenever anything touched it. There were no dentists to fill cavities in those days in Tibet. Finally, someone had to pull the tooth out of his mouth so his mouth could heal, and that was terribly painful!



One day, his father was very kind and showed the little tulku what was inside the *gau*, the sacred prayer box that his father always carried.

There were several little precious, sacred things in the *gau*. One of them was a *tsa-tsa*, a small clay statue of a deity. This one was dark colored, and the size of a small child's thumb, with a dancing female deity.

His father placed it on Garchen Rinpoche's head to bless him. The image of the deity on it was not very clear, but Garchen Rinpoche loved it at first sight. The deity looked graceful and quiet, like a playful friend.

Garchen Rinpoche asked his father if he could have it. His father said, “No.” Sometime later, the little tulku asked his *pala* hopefully, whether he would let him have the beautiful *tsa-tsa*. Again, his father said, “No.”

On other occasions, when Garchen Rinpoche thought his father might be in a more peaceful mood, he asked again, hoping his father would see how much he wanted it. But whenever he begged his father to have it, his father always firmly said “No.” Day after day he thought about it, and he wanted it more and more.

One day, his father accidentally left his *gau* on his pillow. What a great opportunity! He suddenly reached out and took the *gau* in his hands, opened it and took out the *tsa-tsa*. He thought, “Oh, how very precious! This is now mine!” He carefully closed the *gau* and placed it back on the pillow.

He didn’t even think about the ten non-virtues that his father constantly made him learn and recite. One of the ten non-virtues is taking what is not freely given to you - for example, stealing. He didn’t even think that what he did was an act of stealing. He just took the *tsa-tsa* without thinking.

The day that the little tulku’s father found out that the *tsa-tsa* was missing, he bellowed in anger! Naturally his son ran away from such a frightening sound, knowing what was coming next. His father chased after the little thief. Garchen Rinpoche was punished badly, for stealing, for not remembering that his act was a non-virtue at the moment he did it, for not admitting his misdeed, and for running away from his father. His father made him promise he would NEVER take anything that was not given to him.

Garchen Rinpoche was sad and angry, not at himself, but at his own father. “It was such a small thing,” he thought. “How could my father not have the heart to give it to me? Even if I took it from him, he still had so many other precious things with him!”

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Why didn’t he eat all of his mother’s face cream? (he didn’t want his father to find out and beat him)
2. What painful things happened to him as a result of taking more sweets than he was allowed? (ear infection, painful cavity in his tooth so he had to have it taken out)
3. Did he ask his father for the *tsa-tsa* before taking it? (Yes)
4. Did he think that he was stealing when he took the *tsa-tsa*? (No)
5. Why did Garchen Rinpoche feel that his father should have given him the *tsa-tsa*? (it was a small thing and his father had many other precious things)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION:

***“We obtain many objects thinking this will cause happiness. But in fact, by not recognizing the negative emotions and instead acting upon them, we may think we are accumulating objects, but what we are really accumulating is causes of suffering for the future.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 68.***

What do we mean by taking what is not freely given to you?

Stealing is one example, but there are other ways we take what was not freely given to us.

Sometimes we take something that isn't ours, and it's not exactly stealing, but it's still wrong.

Here are some examples:

Grabbing something that's not yours without first asking permission.

Taking something without finding out who it belongs to, or who is supposed to get it.

Taking something because you think no one will notice if you take it,

or by doing something sneaky.

Snatching something out of someone's hands (even if you just wanted to see it).

Borrowing and not returning something.

Hiding something that doesn't belong to you, so you can get it later and no one else can get it.

Forgetting to pay for something, and walking away with it.

Getting something by cheating, lying or tricking someone into giving something to you.

And even taking small things, like a pen, pencil, candy, or gum that wasn't given to you.

Also, taking something after we asked for it and the answer was “no” (like young Garchen tulku).

Sometimes we don't notice that we are taking something that we shouldn't.

Because in our mind, it's ours.

Maybe we think that it *should* be ours.

Maybe we think we deserve it, or we need it..

Or maybe we think the other person doesn't really need it.

Like little Garchen Rinpoche didn't really think he was stealing because he thought his father should have given him the *tsa-tsa*, and his father had so many other sacred things.

We think we'll be happier when we take what we want.

Sometimes we might think taking something is funny. Our friends may laugh at our sneakiness.

Sometimes it gives us a thrill to sneak something.

Also, on TV – we might laugh at people being sneaky and getting things, or tricking people into giving things to them.

But, if we do these things, what kind of karma is that? It's negative karma.

And what happens then? Something bad will happen to us as a result.

Like Garchen Rinpoche suffered the results of negative karma with the ear infection and the painful tooth that had to be taken out.

Of course, sometimes we get punished more directly – by our parents.

It's very important not to take even small things that don't belong to us,

Because then we might develop a bad habit of taking things without thinking.

Also it makes us more greedy.

And then we take things when we are older without thinking first.  
We can even end up going to jail as a result!

So we should be aware, before we take something, whether it was freely given to us.  
Think - Who gave it to you? Did you ask for it first? Are you supposed to return it?  
Was it supposed to be free for anyone to take?  
What if you don't know if it was freely given to you?  
Ask whether you can have it. Or don't take it.

**PRACTICE THIS WEEK:** Notice if you take something from another person – for example, a toy, food, pen, candy, or TV remote – and think about whether it was freely given to you.

**ACTIVITY:** Discuss - In the following situations, should you take (or keep)? Why or why not? Should you say something before taking or keeping? What should you say?

1. There is a bowl of candy at your relatives' house. You feel like taking one candy.
2. Your sister or brother has the TV remote in their hand and is not using it. You want to change the channel.
3. You are filling out a form with a pen from a cup of pens for people to use for filling out the form, and no one asks you to give the pen back. You see someone else walk away with one of the pens from the cup.
4. Your brother or sister has a toy that belongs to both of you and you want it back.
5. You borrowed a toy from a friend who told you that you can keep it.
6. You see a dollar on the sidewalk and there are people walking ahead of you.
7. You see a quarter on the floor, and there are people standing around but they aren't looking at you.
8. You just bought something for \$19 and you gave the cashier a \$20 bill. After you walk away from the cashier, you notice that she gave you \$5 bill rather than a \$1 in change.
9. You accidentally break an item for sale in a store. No one saw you break it.
10. You borrow a little toy from a friend, but your friend doesn't ask for you to give it back.
11. You walk out of a store accidentally with something you didn't pay for.
12. Other kids got candy and you are the only one who didn't get any. You see the box of candy, and you think the teacher probably just forgot to give you some. The teacher looks busy.