

Chapter 4 – Horrible Injustice – Why?

Garchen Rinpoche was the first person to reach the village of Yu-Gyi Dewa, ahead of the 25 Tibetan soldiers and Mingyur Rinpoche. He trotted his horse over the dry winter fields ahead of everyone else, just as he did when he was young, arriving hours ahead of his attendants when he couldn't wait to get back to his village home from the monastery. Now he was impatient to get to his injured friends in Yu-Gyi Dewa.

When he arrived, he found the nun, Namdrul Rinpoche and Konchog Osel among the many injured people lying next to the fallen tents.



The nun, named Ani Dun Chu, had a big cut on her neck and some wounds on her arms. She was also stabbed three times on her hips. Namdrul Rinpoche had been hit on the head many times, but there was no wound that anyone could see on his head. His heavy winter robe had several rips on the side. He had been slashed several times, but the knife had not cut him. The only injury he had was a small cut on his wrist.

The worst of all the victims was Konchog Osel. He was hit by a sword blade in the head, and the cut was very deep. Garchen Rinpoche looked at the wound, and it seemed as if even the skull bones had been cut. There was a lot of blood that was coming out from an artery, an extremely deadly situation.



The sight of this terrible wound and the suffering of this man etched into Rinpoche's mind and brought wrenching pain to his heart. It felt to Rinpoche like a crack was splitting his own head, because he had so much empathy.

Konchog Osel died soon afterward.

The first thing Namdrul Rinpoche said to Garchen Rinpoche was, "Whatever happened was the result of past karma! Do not follow it!"

He meant that they each were attacked and injured because of some bad acts they had done in past lives. This is karma, the law of cause and effect. And he was warning Garchen Rinpoche not to follow his anguished thoughts of what happened, but instead to remember that this is the way life is - everyone receives the results of his past actions.

Garchen Rinpoche didn't respond; he just started crying. Then he went with the Chushi Gangdruk soldiers directly to the representatives of the village. He yanked out the letter written by the Tibetan army commander Phurba Tsering and started to read it out loud in front of them, his voice flaring up with anger. He read to them:

“You and your people are alone responsible for your foolish and evil acts. If you do not fully regret, confess and pay for your actions, you will be punished accordingly. The Chushi Gangdruk soldiers will carry out punishment if you do not comply. The Gar people are under the protection of Chushi Gangdruk. Give medicines to the victims and take care of their needs. Give lands for the families from Gar to settle on. Give them food rations, cheese, butter and necessary supplies. You are also responsible for providing housing and food to the 25 soldiers during their stay in the village until they leave.”

Later, Garchen Rinpoche sent someone to tell the men who went back home to Gar to quickly return. Because the Yu-Gyi Dewa villagers were ordered to provide food and medicine to the group from Gar, they offered the group food, medicine and ordinary traditional Tibetan pills.

But Namdrul Rinpoche advised them, “Whatever happened was the result of our past karma! Don’t create any more karma for yourselves by accepting them!”

He gave this advice because accepting anything from them would be another karma, so they would then owe something to the villagers. He didn’t want them to be entangled with these cruel people in any way. So, the Gar group refused what the villagers offered.

The victims’ wounds slowly healed. Everyone was getting better after some days, but the small cut on Namdrul Rinpoche’s wrist got worse. It wasn’t healing properly. It continued to swell up, and the skin around it turned shiny and purple-red. When the men returned from their trip to Gar, they had brought with them more weapons, guns, medicines, food and animals.

Soon after they returned, Namdrul Rinpoche gathered everyone in the group together and advised them, “This is not a good place for us to live. We should move to the other side of the mountain and try to stay there.”

The land on the other side of the mountain belonged to the village of Yu-Gyi Dewa, but at least it was out of sight of the resentful people in the village. Everyone agreed with Namdrul Rinpoche, so they spent a few days making preparations to relocate their camps away from the place of the horrible attack.

By that time, however, Namdrul Rinpoche was in terrible condition. The infection on his wrist had spread through his body so much that his hands and arms and even his feet and legs were all swollen. Fortunately, his older brother, who had just returned from the trip to Gar village, was a doctor. He gave Namdrul Rinpoche some traditional Tibetan medicine. But it didn’t seem to help. Namdrul Rinpoche was so ill that he couldn’t walk, and the monks had to create a stretcher from two long sticks to carry Namdrul Rinpoche over the mountain.

Garchen Rinpoche was in agony watching his good friend’s health deteriorating. He brought together about thirty monks, some from Gar Gon and others from another local area near Yu-Gyi Dewa, to pray to Red Chenrezig for the recovery of Namdrul Rinpoche.

Still, Namdrul Rinpoche's health steadily got worse. His entire body swelled up. The burning pain from the swelling made his body stiff so he couldn't move. Yet he never complained or mentioned anything about the attackers. He didn't say a single word of anger toward them. He spent all his time meditating with his eyes closed while lying on his back, and he quietly listened to the monks chanting.

Around them in the outside world, the Chinese Communists were attacking and brutally cracking down on the Tibetan resistance fighters, who didn't have the training, weapons and support like the Chinese, so they were not well equipped to defend themselves. They scattered in all directions, fighting a losing battle against the powerful Chinese army. Nowhere in Tibet was safe for fleeing refugees. The overall situation in Tibet was getting desperate in every way.



As Garchen Rinpoche watched his friend's health get worse and worse, he had many memories of their earlier times together. When little Garchen Rinpoche at the age of seven went to live at Gar Gon monastery, Namdrul Rinpoche, who then was about 15 years old, had always behaved like a kind older brother. He played games with the little Garchen Rinpoche and Mingyur Rinpoche and showed them funny tricks. He also gave them thoughtful advice. The two younger tulkus looked up to Namdrul Rinpoche, as he was diligent in his Dharma practice and took his studies very seriously.

(Photo of Namdrul Rinpoche)

Namdrul Rinpoche had completed not just the usual three-year long retreat, but a four-year meditation retreat. Then after that, he walked on a holy pilgrimage for over a month all the way to Lhasa to visit the Potala palace, which was the home of the Dalai Lama, and the Jokhang Temple, as he had wanted to do for a long time. Then it was Garchen Rinpoche's turn to do the long retreat. He started his retreat, but he had to end it suddenly because of the violence all around Tibet from the Chinese army. So, he joined the other tulkus in leading prayers and ceremonies for peace and to prevent war. At that time, his parents and brothers and sisters left Tibet and went to Pemako, so he was totally cut off from his family. Namdrul Rinpoche then became his older brother, father, advisor, and confidante – someone he could share his most personal thoughts with, especially because Namdrul Rinpoche had a calm and sympathetic heart that radiated kindness.

As he was getting more and more ill and approaching death, Namdrul Rinpoche called Garchen Rinpoche and repeatedly warned him: "After I die, do not fight or retaliate against the attackers! Do not try to harm them. Do not try to seek revenge!"

His voice was soft, as it was very difficult for him to speak in his weakened state, but he seemed to have sickening worries that feelings of revenge could arise in Garchen Rinpoche. As an older Vajra brother, Namdrul Rinpoche understood well the personality of the powerful young

Garchen tulku. What Namdrul Rinpoche dreaded most after his death was an explosion of negative emotions in Garchen Rinpoche. Any actions that would follow those emotions would be a pathway to hell. Namdrul Rinpoche feared more for young Garchen Rinpoche's future than his own death. He weakly muttered,

"This is my karma. Do not try to seek revenge!"



Those simple and sincere words make Garchen Rinpoche break down in tears. Previously when he heard Namdrul Rinpoche remind him again and again that karmas (actions) ripen into future results, Garchen Rinpoche didn't respond. Life for many people seemed too unfair; it couldn't be results of their karma. Sometimes he even ended up walking away. At those times he didn't remember that when he was younger, he believed in karma. And now Garchen

Rinpoche was feeling a deep grief, like a boulder in his heart. An overwhelming sense of outrage suddenly came over him, and he cried out in anguish to Namdrul Rinpoche:

"Whether you end up going to a buddha land or a pure realm, that is fine. But even if I have to go to the 80 hell-worlds, I will take revenge!"

The older brother of Namdrul Rinpoche was sitting in the tent, dreary and silent, as Namdrul Rinpoche lay there dying. The flickering butter lamps in the tent reflected a soft light on Namdrul Rinpoche's swollen body and face. Namdrul Rinpoche didn't open his eyes. He was unable to say anything. Whatever the young Garchen Rinpoche had hollered next to him was fading in and out, as Namdrul Rinpoche's sense of hearing was disappearing. His breath soon came to a stop.



Garchen Rinpoche wailed out in grief, piercing through the dark winter night. He sobbed,

"I don't care! Even if I go to hell right now, I will go! I will take revenge!"

At the young age of 29, Namdrul Rinpoche passed away in late 1958, about a month after the violent attack by the villagers of Yu-Gyi Dewa.

QUESTIONS:

1. Namdrul Rinpoche only had one small cut. Where was it? (on his wrist)
2. What was the underlying cause of the attack and injuries, as Namdrul Rinpoche said? (karma from past lives)
3. Did Namdrul Rinpoche want the victims to take the medicine given by the Yu-Gyi Dewa villagers? (no). Why not? (the victims would then owe the villagers)
4. Who was like an older brother and father to Garchen Rinpoche? (Namdrul Rinpoche)
5. What did Namdrul Rinpoche warn Garchen Rinpoche not to do? (not to seek revenge, not to harm them or fight against them)
6. What did Garchen Rinpoche want to do in spite of Namdrul Rinpoche's advice? (take revenge)

DHARMA DISCUSSION – Horrible Injustice – Why?

The young Garchen Rinpoche knew about karma since he was a child.

He knew that when we do a helpful, good action or say kind words, what happens as a result? A good thing will happen to us later in this life or in a future life.

When we do something harmful or say hurtful words, what happens as a result? A bad thing will happen to us later or in future a life.

So we get exactly what we deserve, the good and the bad, from the karmas we made in this life and our many, many past lives.

We all have a mix of all the good and bad karmas from past lives that makes both good and bad things happen to us in this life.

The young Garchen Rinpoche had no problem believing in karma when he was very young. But then he saw extreme injustice, something extremely unfair. Kind innocent people were violently attacked, and the cruel attackers weren't going to be put in jail for their crime. He thought the attackers should be punished right away for such a horrible act, and they shouldn't get away with it!

But Namdrul Rinpoche was correct - they shouldn't take revenge against the villagers.

If the people from Gar attack in revenge, that would be negative karma that would cause a negative result.

They should remember that the attack was the result of the victims' own past negative karmas.

So, acting in revenge wouldn't help; instead, it would just create more negativity.

And maybe the villagers would attack them again in return.

It was frustrating that with the situation in Tibet at that time, there was no justice system with police, courts and jails available to punish the attackers for their crimes.

Even the letter from the Chushi Gangdruk commander didn't say that the soldiers would punish the attackers right away, it said only that they would be punished if they don't admit and pay for their bad actions.

Life often seems very unfair, and maybe it's difficult to believe in karma, because karma doesn't make results come immediately.

We often get the bad results much later, often in a future life, after we did a bad act, And similarly, we don't get the good results until much later, or in a future life, after we did a good act.

For example, when Shakyamuni Buddha was attacked by his evil-minded cousin Devadatta, the Buddha's foot was cut very badly. That was a result of a bad act the Buddha did in a distant past life.

A person may be so kind all of his life, like Namdrul Rinpoche, and still suffer extreme cruelty from others.

And people who are cruel, hateful, or selfish, or who lie, cheat, and steal, are successful and popular, and don't seem to suffer much.

When it seems so unfair, when we see a huge injustice, we might feel angry, or full of hatred. Or we may feel like taking revenge.

When we feel this way, we can remember what Namdrul Rinpoche said.

We shouldn't take revenge; that only causes more trouble for ourselves.

What should we do?

We can tell parents, teachers or police, and they take care of justice and punishment.

Or, we can just stay away from those who are misbehaved.

In some situations, we can try to prevent them from causing more cruelty or injustice, or we can try to stop their misbehavior, as long as we don't do it with feelings of hatred or revenge.

In any case, we should remember karma, cause and effect, and avoid making more negative karma.

What about Garchen Rinpoche's efforts to heal Namdrul Rinpoche with prayers, mantras and ceremony. Was it useless if Namdrul Rinpoche had to suffer the results of his own karma?

No, because medicine, prayer, or chanting may be able to cure a person, depending on the type of karma they have (which we can never know), and depending also on whether the person really wants to continue living in that body.

With prayer and chanting, we offer our merits to the person, and in some situations that may overcome the negative karma.

But we cannot know whether the person's karma is the type that definitely would result in death or ongoing sickness or pain, or whether it can be overpowered with merit or by healing.

So we do our best to help but we understand that it may not always result in a cure.