

THE LIFE OF MILAREPA Part 7 – Dishonesty

Milarepa felt comforted and even joyful by Dakmema's promise to have him go to Lama Ngokpa for teachings, so he stayed at Marpa's house and worked on the tower.

Every month Marpa celebrated the tenth day of the moon with a ceremony. Dakmema made barley into beer for everyone to drink. This month, she made some of the beer very strong, and some very weak. She gave the strong beer to Marpa. Dakmema and Milarepa only touched the weak beer to their lips and pretended to drink it. They offered more of the strong beer to Marpa, and after awhile he became completely drunk and fell into a deep sleep.



As soon as she saw her husband asleep, Dakmema removed the precious jewels of Naropa and the ruby mala (necklace or rosary) from Marpa's room. She wrapped them in an expensive cloth.

Then she wrote a message as if it was written by Marpa, wrapped it together with the jewels in the cloth, and pressed his signature seal into warm wax on the package to

seal it, so it appeared to be wrapped by Marpa. She gave it to Milarepa, saying,

"Act as if these things were sent by Lama Marpa. Go and offer them to Lama Ngokpa and ask him to teach you."

She directed Milarepa to Lama Ngokpa's house, and Milarepa left, putting all of his hopes in Lama Ngokpa.

Two days later, Marpa asked his wife, "What is Great Magician doing now?"

She answered, "He is on the road. I know nothing more."

"Where did he go?" the lama asked.

"He told me that even if he finished the work on the tower, you would not give him instruction but would only shower him with criticism and punishment. He said that he was going to search for another lama and prepared to leave. I had the thought that if I had warned you, you would

have beaten him again. To avoid this shame, I said nothing to you. I did everything to delay his departure. But, without listening, he left.”

With an angry face, the lama asked, “When did he leave?”

“He left yesterday.”

Marpa remained thoughtful for a moment, then said, “My son cannot be far away yet.”



Actually, at that moment, Milarepa was arriving at the mountain where Lama Ngokpa lived.

The lama was giving a teaching to a large group of his students.

Milarepa did a prostration to him from a distance away, at the moment that the lama was saying some deeply profound words, including “I am the master of the Dharma.” In response to Milarepa, Lama Ngokpa removed his hat and, pointing toward Milarepa, said to a monk nearby,

“This is the manner of greeting used by Marpa’s students. And the words I was saying as he approached are a good omen. This man will be a master of the Dharma. Go and ask him who he is.”

The monk went to Milarepa, and recognized him as a student of Marpa when they had visited before. The monk asked, “Why have you come?”

Milarepa replied, “Since the Lama Marpa is very busy, I am the only one that he has not had time to instruct. I have come here to ask for the teaching. As gifts I bring the jewels of Naropa and his ruby mala.”

The monk went back to Lama Ngokpa and told him, “It is Great Magician,” and repeated the words of Milarepa.

Lama Ngokpa was filled with great joy, exclaiming, "The jewels and the mala of the Great Master Naropa in my house! This is so rare and marvelous. We must go out to receive them. For today, let us stop at this auspicious point in the lesson.



Monks, fetch a parasol, and quickly, some flags and cymbals, and ask Great Magician to take his place in the procession."

So a monk went to where Milarepa was waiting, and gave him the joyous greeting from Lama Ngokpa. Milarepa then joined the monks who had formed a procession with umbrellas, banners and cymbals.

They entered the lama's house, where Milarepa prostrated and offered the lama the package with the gift of Naropa's jewels. With tearful eyes, the lama raised the gifts to his forehead to receive their blessing. He placed them on his altar at the most prominent place, and placed offerings in front of them.

Then he opened the letter in the package. The letter greeted him and said, "Since I have gone into retreat and the Great Magician has no patience, I am sending him to ask you for the teaching. Give him initiation and instruction. As evidence of my permission to do this, I am sending you the jewels of Naropa."

Lama Ngokpa said, "Since it is an order from Marpa, I will instruct you. I had thought of sending for you, but happily by the grace of Marpa you have come. First, I must tell you, many students come to me from all over Tibet, but the evil people of the nearby villages always steal our supplies. Go and strike them all with hail. Afterward you will receive initiation and instruction."

Milarepa thought, "I am destined to perform evil deeds. I can only get the sacred teaching by sending hailstorms, and so I am again doing harmful deeds. But if I don't send hail, I will be disobeying the orders of the lama and I shall not hear the teaching. So I cannot avoid sending the hailstorm."

He gathered ritual objects to perform the magic spell. He charged some sesame seeds with magical power and brought them to the area of the villages. He prepared to bring on the hailstorm.

In one of the villages, he stayed near the house of an older woman, and built himself a shelter there. The storm started quickly, with rumbling thunder and dark clouds piling up in the sky. The wind whipped around, and pounding rain poured out of the sky. So much rain fell that it flooded fields and barns. Then the hailstones began to fall.



The woman cried out,

“When my barley fields are struck by hail, what will I have to eat?”
And she began to cry.

Milarepa felt so guilty, thinking, “What I am doing is criminal.”

Then he said to the woman, “Quick, draw the shape of your field.”



She drew in the air a long triangle. Milarepa made the same shape with a stick in the sand. He made his hands into a mudra, and covered the triangle with a wide

pan. One corner of the triangle stuck out a bit beyond the edge of the pan. The wind blew that corner.

The storm continued with a heavy hailstorm. After the winds died down and the storm cleared away, Milarepa and the woman went out to her field to see what happened. They saw that the fields in all directions were flattened and ruined by the hailstorm. Only the woman’s field in

the shape of a triangle was untouched, with the barley standing tall. But the far corner of the field was flattened and flooded, just like the corner of the triangle that stuck out beyond the pan was blown away.

Milarepa assured the woman that from now on her field would always be protected. Then he left to go back to Lama Ngokpa's place.

On the way, he saw a man and his son whose flock of sheep had disappeared in the flood. Milarepa said to them,

"It is I who have done this. Do not steal from the monks of Lama Ngokpa anymore. If you steal from them again you will be struck by hail each time in the same way."

They reported these threats to the other villagers and out of fear, they decided to become followers of the lama and offered to be of service to him.



At the edge of a field, Milarepa found many small dead birds and rats. They had died from the fierce hailstorm. He gathered them up in his rain cloak and returned to the lama's house with them.

As he arrived, he heaped the dead birds and rats at

the feet of Lama Ngokpa, and said,

"Lama Rinpoche, I came here for the holy Dharma but in truth I have only sinned. Have compassion for me, a great sinner." Tears fell from his eyes and ran down his cheeks.

The lama answered, "Great Magician, have no fear. We, the students of Naropa and Maitripa know the secret formula which enables great sinners to achieve enlightenment instantly. In the future all these creatures now killed by the hail will be reborn around you and will form a procession when you attain full enlightenment. Rejoice that from now on, thanks to me, they will not be reborn in the lower worlds. If you do not believe me, I will show you."



He closed his eyes and sat motionless for a moment, then snapped his fingers.

Immediately the dead bodies came to life. In an instant, the birds flew up to the sky and the rats raced over the ground to return to their nests.

Milarepa thought, "Now I have seen a real Buddha. How much better it

would be, how much better, of many creatures were to die in this way."



Then the lama gave him Hevajra initiation, and teachings. Hevajra appears in an embrace with his female partner, and together they represent Wisdom and Compassion.

The male represents compassion, and the female represents wisdom. Compassion must be with wisdom, and wisdom must be with compassion.

Compassion without wisdom results in feeling compassion for the wrong person, for the wrong reasons, or in the wrong way, leading to unpleasant results. Wisdom without compassion leads to cold-heartedness, selfishness, pride or ego.

After Milarepa received the teachings, he moved into an abandoned cave from where he could see the lama's house. He pulled stones and mud around the opening of the cave to close it off completely except for a small opening through which the lama could instruct him.

In the cave, Milarepa meditated constantly. But because he had left Marpa without his permission, Milarepa had no inner experience from the meditation.



One day, Lama Ngokpa came to the cave and asked Milarepa,

“Brother Great Magician, have you experienced any inner signs?”

“No, nothing,” Milarepa answered.

The lama appeared shocked, and said “What are you saying? Unless my spiritual lineage has become polluted with disharmony, it has the power to bring about an awakening quickly. You have come to me in good faith. But if you did not have the permission of Lama Marpa to leave, why did he send gifts to me? What is going on here? Whatever it is, persevere in your meditation.”

Milarepa stayed in the cave, full of fear. He wondered whether he should tell Lama Ngokpa the whole truth. But he didn’t have the courage to speak about it. He thought, “In any case, Marpa is sure to hear about this.” So he just focused on meditation and avoided thinking about his fears.



Meanwhile, Marpa had completed the tower that Milarepa had built and almost completed. He sent a letter to Lama Ngokpa requesting him to send thin cane so the wooden outer layer at the top of the tower could be finished.

The letter also said,

“When I have set the outer layer and the top of the tower, you should come for the consecration of the tower, and also to celebrate the coming of age of my son Doday Büm. Bring with you a certain evildoer who belongs to me.”

Lama Ngokpa went to the cave where Milarepa was meditating, and handed the letter to Milarepa through the small opening to the cave.

The lama said, “It is just as this letter says. The evildoer which is spoken of in the letter was not sent by Marpa.”

Milarepa knew he was the evildoer Marpa wrote about. He replied, "It is true that the order did not come from the lama himself. It is the lama's wife who gave me the letter and the gifts and sent me here."

The lama exclaimed, "Ah ha! If that's the way it is, we have no reason for working together. Without the lama's permission you will not get any good results. There is nothing to be done. He said to bring you back. Will you or will you not go?"

Milarepa said weakly, "May I go with you as a servant?"

The lama answered, "Good. When I have sent the cane wood to Marpa, I will send someone to find out the day of the celebration. Until then, stay here in seclusion in the cave."

QUESTIONS:

1. How did Dakmema take the jewels of Naropa from her husband without him knowing about it? (she served him strong beer until he got drunk and fell asleep)
2. Why did Lama Ngokpa believe that Marpa had sent Milarepa to him with the gifts? (Dakmema wrote a letter that seemed like it came from Marpa)
3. Did Marpa want Milarepa to leave him? (no)
4. Why did Dakmema not tell Marpa that Milarepa was leaving them? (she thought he would beat Milarepa again and not teach him)
5. What did Lama Ngokpa ask Milarepa to do at first? (send a hailstorm to the nearby villages)
6. What happened to the birds and rats in the village from the hailstorm? (they died)
7. What did Lama Ngokpa do when he saw the dead birds and rats? (brought them back to life)
8. Why couldn't Milarepa get any good experience from meditation? (because he had deceived Lama Ngokpa with the forged letter and stolen gifts)

DHARMA DISCUSSION – DISHONESTY:

"Being deceitful with bias is a great negativity." -Milarepa (100,000 Songs p. 40)

Milarepa couldn't get any good results from meditation because he had gotten teachings from Lama Ngokpa by dishonesty. It was dishonest to steal Naropa's jewels from Marpa's room and

give a fake letter that seemed like it was from Marpa, telling Lama Ngokpa to give Milarepa initiation and instruction.

Who was dishonest? Dakmema was dishonest. And then by going along with her plan, Milarepa also was dishonest.

Dakmema was a good and loving person, and she had extreme compassion for Milarepa. But she had compassion without wisdom. As we learned in the story about Hevajra, compassion must go together with wisdom. Compassion without wisdom often has bad or even disastrous results. For example, we should not let our compassion for a friend tempt us to help him cheat on a test, shoplift from a store, play too many videogames, or do other things that are not good for us.

Milarepa had good reasons to go to Lama Ngokpa, to receive Dharma teachings. But he was trying to get it by dishonesty, giving a letter that he knew was not really from Marpa.

So Dakmema and Milarepa had good intent, but not enough wisdom. They didn't think carefully about the possible consequences or results of their actions. They didn't think about the fact that it is negative karma to be dishonest.

Many people who don't understand karma may think it's okay to be dishonest as long as they don't get caught and as long as they get what they want. But knowing about karma, we realize that even if we get what we want by dishonesty, there will be a negative result at some point.

What do we mean by dishonesty? Lying, hiding the truth, tricking or deceiving someone. Making it seem we didn't do something when we actually did. Saying we will do something when we don't plan to do it. Even "white lies," to avoid hurting someone's feelings, are not honest, and it is better to try to find a way to avoid lying but be kind with our words.

Sometimes we are tempted to be dishonest because we don't want to disappoint or upset a parent or teacher with a truth they won't like. We're afraid they'll be extremely upset if we told the truth. We might think we have to lie so they won't be upset. But maybe we really are worried about being embarrassed, scolded or punished if we tell the truth. If we lie, that can easily develop into a pattern or habit of lying, not just with them, but with others also. So we have to try to find a way to be honest, and have the courage to take whatever scolding or punishment we get.

How did Milarepa's dishonesty cause him not to be able to meditate well?
Dishonesty disturbs the mind.

It causes negative thoughts and feelings, such as guilt, fear of being caught, worry about what might happen as a result, thinking about how to avoid getting caught.

Actually, any impurities in the mind, such as anger, revenge, jealousy, and selfishness, make our mind unable to relax and concentrate on meditation.

Even when we are not thinking about them, they disturb us in the back of our mind.

But if we develop a habit of always trying to be honest, then we are developing the power of being truthful - we quickly and automatically think of being honest before we speak.

This becomes a habit, so over time it becomes easier to be honest.

One way to stay honest is to be careful with our words not to agree or promise to do something that we might not be able to do.

For example, when someone asks whether we will do something, we can say "I plan to" or "I expect to" or "I'll try to."

ACTIVITY:

Make wrist malas. They can be reminders of the jewels of Naropa and how Milarepa learned not to be dishonest. Then use the wrist malas to chant Om Mani Padme Hum together.