

Chapter 5 – Dealing with Intense Negative Emotions

For many days, Garchen Rinpoche and the monks from Gar Gon monastery performed long ceremonies for Namdrul Rinpoche that are normally done when very important lamas pass away. They were in deep grief after losing their dear Rinpoche. Afterward, the men in the group from Gar went back to the commander of the Tibetan army, Phurba Tsering, and made a complaint against the leaders of the Yu-Gyi Dewa monastery and village, demanding that those who committed the terrible attack be punished for their crime. The commander agreed with the complaint and sent some soldiers to go to Yu-Gyi Dewa with the Gar Gon people to punish those who committed the crime.

With the permission of their commander, the soldiers punished the three people who were the most guilty by whipping them 500 times, whipped the others who were involved in the attack also, and forced all of them to pay a fine of 10,000 silver coins. The people didn't have that many coins, so they had to pay in coins along with animals such as horses, yaks, goats and sheep, plus butter, tea and wheat.



In addition, some of the people were forced to wear a heavy wooden board around their neck, a type of punishment that was used in China for serious crimes. The board had a hole in the middle for the head to go through, and was locked in place so it couldn't come off until the punishment was finished, perhaps after several months or years.

After the soldiers carried out the punishment, a high-ranking Tibetan army officer told Garchen Rinpoche and others in the Gar group to sign an agreement that from now on, they would not try to take revenge again. The soldiers couldn't stay there to keep peace between the two groups because they had to return to their army base and take care of bigger conflicts.

The army officer said, "All of them already have been punished! Please sign here and promise you will not seek revenge anymore!"

The elders of the Gar group squinted at the officer and the flimsy piece of paper in his hand. At first, they gave him a silent stare as if they couldn't understand what he was saying. Then all of a sudden, they started to raise their voices and talk at the same time. Their faces were furious. Their words were sharp and intense, and they didn't give a chance for Garchen Rinpoche to speak. At critical moments like this, they were quick to conveniently disregard the youngster. Deep down, they didn't want to drag him down from his holy status and involve him in these problems. It seemed as if they wanted to protect him from slipping further into the ugliness of life. They all were struggling with grief and the shock of the attack on their own innocent friends, monks and family members, so their emotions were especially intense.

One of the older men of the Gar group said, “What are you saying? You can’t make us sign such an agreement!”

Another elder, referring to Pachok Rinpoche, who was highly respected as the best of all scholarly and powerful lamas in the area, argued in a gruff deep voice, “Just think, what if we came and tried to kill Pachok Rinpoche. Suppose we said to them, ‘here, take 10,000 coins, here, so we can pierce and cut your Rinpoche’s body!’”

He seemed to rouse the others from Gar to anger. He continued, “What do you think? Would they allow us to inflict pain on their Rinpoche’s body, and then kill him? And then, we use coins to pay for his life and just walk away?”

Some elders from Gar continued to question the officer as the others nodded in agreement, and their anger was blazing like wildfire. The punishment the soldiers had given was not nearly harsh enough compared to the brutal attack of the villagers on Namdrul Rinpoche and the other innocent people.

One of the group cried out, “Our Rinpoche to us is as precious as Pachok Rinpoche is to them!”

Another cried out, “Coins, animals, tea, and wheat . . . How could they ever think that it was enough to replace our Rinpoche’s precious life with such objects? How could we not seek justice? How could you side with them and ask us to forgive them?”

The officer suddenly shouted back, “I will not put up with this anymore! If you don’t agree to sign this piece of paper, then that means you are refusing the Chushi Gangdruk’s order, and so all of you, and I mean all of you, will be punished in turn!”

The Tibetan army soldiers each took a step closer to the Gar group, showing their authority. So the elders decided to sign the paper. They realized that if they had continued to be stubborn and oppose the order of the army, then they too would have been punished.

However, they openly declared to the officer, “You make us sign, so then alright, we’ll sign this paper for your sake. But it doesn’t guarantee anything! When the right time comes, we’re going to take revenge for sure!”

The more the Gar elders didn’t want Garchen Rinpoche to be involved in a plan of revenge, the more he wanted to do it on his own. He made a plan, but he didn’t tell anyone about it. The warrior in him desperately wanted to become the powerful enforcer of justice, what was right and fair. He burned with rage, and he didn’t think about the Dharma teachings of non-violence. Those people from Yu-Gyi Dewa did unforgivable crimes, and he was going to settle it for once and for all. He had suffered the grief of losing all contact with his family when they escaped to India, and now that the one person who was like a father, friend and brother to him died after a brutal attack, he felt overwhelming grief and rage.

The moment Namdrul Rinpoche's older brother, Ngawang, woke up, he immediately sensed something wasn't quite right. It was still dark outside, but when he looked around the tent, he saw an empty spot where Garchen Rinpoche was supposed to be laying.



Everyone else in the tent was sound asleep. A great fear arose in Ngawang, and he pulled off the heavy blanket covering him and rushed out of the tent. He went to each of the neighboring tents looking for Garchen Rinpoche. But he was nowhere in sight. Ngawang thought, Rinpoche must have left to go to Yu-Gyi Dewa! He wasn't sure why he thought that, but maybe it was because he had seen how deeply the young tulku suffered from the loss of Namdrul Rinpoche.

By that time, Garchen Rinpoche had gone quite a long distance after he had slipped out of the tent in the total darkness.

Ngawang raced his horse in the direction of the Yu-Gyi Dewa village, but he thought this was a wild goose chase – how would he find Rinpoche? But then he saw some smoke on a small hill as the sky showed the first pink hint of dawn. When he arrived in front of the smoke, he saw a large boulder on which there were some smoke offerings. Ngawang thought for sure that it must have been the young Garchen tulku who performed a simple morning puja ceremony. He rode on further, and by the time the sunrise showed yellow and orange colors over the mountains, he found the young Rinpoche, who was walking alone on a winding path with an ax in one hand and in the other hand a horse rein, a long leather strap that a person holds in their hands when riding a horse.

Ngawang jumped down from his horse, exclaiming, “Garchen Rinpoche! What are you doing? Where are you going?”

Rinpoche didn't answer. He didn't even look up. He just kept marching.

“Rinpoche! Where are you going?” Ngawang started to scream at the top of his lungs.

Rinpoche screamed back, “You go back! Don't follow me! Go back!”

“Where do you think you're going?” Ngawang bellowed.

Twice as loud, the young tulku bellowed back, “I must go and kill the ones who killed Namdrul Rinpoche!”

Ngawang grabbed Rinpoche's arm and shoulder and struggled to hold him back. The young Rinpoche's eyes were darkly shadowed after many sleepless nights.

Ngawang begged, "Rinpoche! Please! You must not! You cannot! Please listen to me! Please come back with me and let us talk about this! Please!"

As much as Ngawang wanted to stop him, the young tulku wanted to get away. He didn't want to come back. He wanted to continue on his mission very badly. The two men went on struggling with each other for some time until all of a sudden, Rinpoche dropped on the ground and was overwhelmed with tears. He could no longer contain himself. His racking sobs shook him thoroughly with the full knowledge that nothing now could help bring back Namdrul Rinpoche.

He went on weeping for some time. "Rinpoche! Please!" Ngawang pleaded again with his voice softening, "Please listen to me!"

This wasn't the first time Ngawang had seen Rinpoche upset. Ngawang originally was from another monastery, but he transferred to Gar Gon monastery to be Garchen Rinpoche's teacher and trainer for discipline. He later was the manager and treasurer of Gar Gon. Many times when Garchen Rinpoche misbehaved, Ngawang had to assert his control over the young tulku. Many images of the past flickered through Ngawang's mind. Stricken with grief, Ngawang too began to cry. He couldn't bear to watch the young tulku suffer alone.

"Rinpoche! Please, please come back with me! Please don't go alone!" Ngawang sobbed, "If you go alone now, they're going to harm you!" he insisted, "Let's just go back now. We can make arrangements. We'll go in a big group and then we can" Ngawang didn't complete his sentence as his thoughts rambled on and he tried not to follow them. Those thoughts weren't going in a healthy direction.

He gazed at Rinpoche and asked, as tears were running down his cheeks, "What were you thinking of doing? Why did you take the reins of this horse? And this ax? What are you going to do with all of this?"

Rinpoche hesitated for a moment, as he didn't want to answer. His mind was churning, and his breath was choked with sobs. He hadn't ridden his horse. He had taken the reins of another horse because he was afraid that if he took his horse, people would find out and follow him. So, he planned to walk to the house of his older half-brother, Kunkyab, in another village, and persuade Kunkyab to come with him. And if Kunkyab wouldn't join him, then he alone would proceed with his plan to reach Yu-Gyi Dewa, a three day's walk from his half-brother's house.

He said in a choked voice, "I didn't want to take my horse! After I get there, I will ride on their horse and I will" His heart was beating so wildly, it seemed to be pounding in his ears, and he began to gasp for air. The vivid image of the dying Namdrul Rinpoche overflowed from his mind and he cried out,

“I will use this rein to lasso those murderers, and with his ax I will kill them all!”

Of course, it was ridiculous to think that one young man with an ax and leather strap could attack those people without getting killed or seriously injured. But the young tulku was not in his right mind when he was so full of deep grief and rage. After much difficulty, Ngawang was able to bring Rinpoche back with him. After their return to the group, Rinpoche came back to his senses and knew that he needed to purify his mind. He decided to lead the group through a *Nyung-ne* purification retreat, which involved keeping strict vows, or rules, for two and a half days, meditating on Chenrezig and chanting his mantra, not eating anything after lunchtime the first day, and not eating any food at all and maintaining total silence on the second day. After he led the group in the retreat, Garchen Rinpoche continued doing the *nyung ne* retreat until he did it one hundred times, which took him eight months to complete.

Meanwhile, after the group finished the first retreat, the strong men met with the older men in the group, and they discussed a plan of revenge. They told each other that they still couldn't tolerate the pain of the attack on their people no matter what. They focused on feeling offended, whipping up their feelings of anger, which motivated their desire to carry out the plan. They went on acting offended again and again, and it was through this power of being hysterically offended that they felt they had a reason to fight. They considered that others in the group who didn't agree with them were disloyal and cold, not caring about Namdrul Rinpoche and the other victims.

Thirteen men in the group gathered together with guns and bullets. They thought that thirteen strong men would be more than enough for their plan of revenge, since Yu-Gyi Dewa was a rather small village of only 80 families. They didn't allow Garchen Rinpoche to join them. Their plan was to destroy and to take as much as possible. They didn't want too many people to join them because then they would have to share the stolen goods among more people. They walked for five days to the Yu-Gyi Dewa village, and then they began to terrorize the villagers.

First, they tore down all the tents. Then, they robbed all the riches, money and women's jewelry. Many villagers said they felt sorry for the people from Gar, and understood that it was wrong for the villagers to harm Namdrul Rinpoche and the people from Gar. But the men continued robbing them, taking away many animals, such as horses, sheep, goats, and yaks.

When the men arrived back to the camp of the Gar group, they had 187 animals with them, which they distributed to everyone in the Gar group. The thirteen men divided up the other stolen items among themselves.

The thirteen men, however, were not pleased with what they did. They were torn between good and bad, virtues and negativity. Deep in their hearts, they felt remorse, guilt about what they had done. So they invited seven Rinpoches – Garchen Rinpoche, Mingyur Rinpoche and five from other monasteries - to do a Vajrasattva purification ceremony so they could confess their wrong deeds and purify themselves and others.

When Garchen Rinpoche, lamas and the group were praying and performing the rituals together, they didn't feel confident about their practice because they were full of guilt and anguish. They had done negative acts and at the same time were doing positive acts of praying and admitting their wrongdoing. Rinpoche realized that the more they prayed, the more doubt grew in their minds and made them feel guilty.

Some months later, the food supply was getting low, so the people from Gar had to slaughter some of their animals for food. Garchen Rinpoche felt very sorry for the animals, and the negative thoughts he had against the Yu-Gyi Dewa villagers and the Chinese army were suddenly changed to great compassion for the animals.

QUESTIONS:

1. What were the soldiers ordered to do when they went to Yu-Gyi Dewa? (punish the villagers)
2. After the soldiers punished the villagers, what did the army officer want the Gar group to agree not to do? (not to take revenge on the villagers)
3. Was the Gar group willing to sign the agreement? (no)
4. Why did people in the Gar group want to take revenge on the villagers after they had been punished by the soldiers? (they didn't think the punishment was harsh enough)
5. Why did Garchen Rinpoche take revenge on his own rather than with the group? (the group didn't want him to be involved in revenge)
6. After Garchen Rinpoche had run away to take revenge and his teacher brought him back to the group, what did Rinpoche do to purify his mind? (a purification retreat 100 times)

DHARMA DISCUSSION – Dealing with intense negative emotions:

The people from Gar, including Garchen Rinpoche, had intense feelings of rage about the attack, which made them want to take revenge.

Garchen Rinpoche's emotions - his grief and rage - were so intense that he forgot all about Dharma teachings. His mind was preoccupied with the shocking attack that happened just when his people were most vulnerable, when most of the men from Gar were away. And his mind was reeling with grief over the loss of Namdrul Rinpoche. He was so overwhelmed that he wasn't thinking about karma or compassion.

Similarly, when we or someone we love are attacked and hurt, even if the attack was only with words, we might feel intense negative emotions – anger, rage, hatred, vengeance – and insist that the attacker be punished – either by us or someone else.

We might focus on negative thoughts over and over, and try to get relief from those terrible thoughts by taking revenge.

Similarly, in the story, the men in the Gar group kept focusing on how horrible the attack was, and how unfair, harming innocent people.

They also tried to justify their plan for revenge with the crazy idea that taking revenge meant that they had more love for the victims than the others who didn't agree to take revenge.

We see from the story that having intense emotions can be very suddenly dangerous and even deadly – the jealousy and anger of the Yu-Gyi Dewa villagers led to violence, and the grief and anger of the people from Gar led to stealing and almost led to violence.

So we all need to have methods, techniques, to quickly remember when we are very upset so we avoid doing something we might regret.

What are some things you have done, or you have seen people do, when terribly upset, when emotions such as grief, anger, hatred, or jealousy get out of control?

We cry, shout, threaten, throw things, or maybe even break things.

We imagine the terrible things we could do or say to the people who angered us.

We might make a plan for revenge, to show them they can't get away with what they did.

Or maybe we close ourselves in our bedroom or some place to be alone.

Sometimes it's good to be alone to calm ourselves and to avoid upsetting others, as we learned to do when our parents sent us to our rooms.

But sometimes, especially when we're having very negative thoughts that won't go away, and we can't calm down, and especially if we feel destructive or revengeful, then it's better to be with someone who can help us, just listen to us, or even just quietly sit near us, to be a calming presence.

Like Rinpoche, we might be so upset that we don't think about the danger or craziness of what we want to do. That's when we really need to be with someone who can help us calm down, just as Garchen Rinpoche needed to be with his teacher, who could help him get his emotions under control.

When someone else is with us, it helps us change our destructive thoughts into just tears and crying, like what happened with Garchen Rinpoche when his teacher was with him. Crying helps release our intense emotions. And then we can gradually begin to calm down.

If you're alone, you need to prevent yourself from taking revenge or doing any kind of damage. Try to remember that you could get hurt while taking revenge, and that the person might try to get you back for taking revenge.

For example, if someone broke your toy and you break their toy, they might break another one, or attack you.

Remember that you won't feel relief from revenge, at least not for long, because there is something that would remain in your mind: guilt.

As we heard in the story, after the thirteen men took revenge, they felt guilty about it. And after Garchen Rinpoche had gone off to take revenge, he felt so bad about it that he did 100 purification retreats.

What do you do to calm your mind when you are extremely upset?

You could scream into a pillow, punch a pillow, squeeze a “stress ball,” count to ten, take three deep breaths, drink cool water or juice, or take a warm bath – these are ways your body can help calm your mind.

You can try to distract yourself by reading, watching a movie, playing a game, or doing easy homework.

You can clean and reorganize your bedroom – cleaning or putting our things in order helps us clean our mind, put our mind in order.

You can also use the tools of lovingkindness and compassion to calm your mind, like Garchen Rinpoche thought of compassion for the slaughtered animals.

You can remember that there are many other people in the world who are as upset as you are, or even more upset than you, and wish that they feel better.

Or you can wish that no one feel as bad as you feel.

Even just one moment of a kind thought helps you feel better, erasing bad thoughts.

Also, try to remember karma – that your bad experience was a result of your past negative karma, and now that result is over, it’s gone, you are finished with that karma.

If you can remember to say a mantra or a prayer, it helps you feel better.

When it’s not you but someone else who is upset or in crisis, you can help them!

You can suggest that they use one or more of the techniques mentioned in this lesson.

Or even if you just sit quietly with them, it’s extremely helpful and might save them from some act they may regret later.