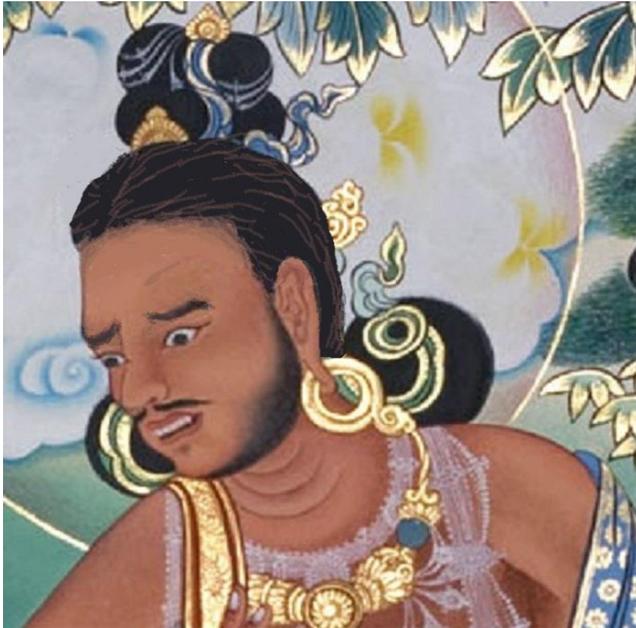


THE LIFE OF NAROPA, Part 3 – Obedience and Patience

Naropa had walked a long way, experiencing many unusual visions which taught him Dharma lessons that he needed to learn before he met his Lama, Tilopa. And he received teachings and empowerments from him. But he still had much more to learn.

One day, Tilopa and Naropa were standing on the terrace on the flat roof of the temple. Suddenly, Tilopa jumped off of the roof of the temple, and landed gracefully on the ground below, like a cat. Then he looked up at Naropa, and said, “If you want teachings, come after me. If I had a student, he would jump from this roof.”

Naropa thought, “He must be telling me I should jump.” Although Naropa was younger than Tilopa, he knew it would be dangerous to jump from that high roof all the way to the ground. His Lama had special powers, so it might be easy for him to do it. And now his precious Lama was asking him to jump. It must be the right thing to do. He trusted his Lama. So he jumped.



But when he landed, there was no magical power to soften his fall. He fell down hard on the ground, and felt intense pain. He moaned in agony as he felt the sharp pains in his legs and arms.

Hearing his moans, Tilopa said, “What has happened to you?”

Naropa replied, “This body is like a clay pot, it breaks, and it is like a corpse.”

Tilopa said, “This body is like a clay pot that we cherish and love so much, but it may be broken, Naropa. Look at the mirror of the mind through the wish-fulfilling gem of the secret Tantra, the Secret Teachings of the

Dakinis.”

Naropa understood that the body is fragile, it can be injured, broken and in terrible pain. So, it is a waste of time to be proud of the body, worried about the body, thinking that we are the body. Instead, we must focus on the mind.

Tilopa then gave teachings to Naropa, and then Naropa went to stay in the forest where he could meditate alone, and where local villagers could offer him food every day. He meditated on these teachings for one year. After that time, he returned to his Lama to request more teachings.

Tilopa said, “Come after me,” and of course Naropa followed him. Then Tilopa walked up to a big pile of fragrant sandalwood which had been set on fire, and asked him to jump into the burning sandalwood. Naropa knew this was a test, and that he must obey his Lama. Getting teachings from his Lama was more important than anything. So he jumped into the fire.



And he got badly burned! When Naropa came out of the burning flames, Tilopa asked, “What has happened to you?”

Naropa replied, “The sandalwood fire brings pain to the body, which

can’t be separated from the flame.”

Tilopa said, “Your body, that you think is so important, may be burned, Naropa. Look at the mirror of the samaya mind, the true pure mind, the wish-fulfilling gem of the secret Tantra, the Secret Teachings of the Dakinis.”

Tilopa gave Naropa instructions, and Naropa again went into the forest and meditated on them for a year. Then he returned to his Lama and again requested further teachings.

Tilopa walked with Naropa toward a small river. Tilopa looked into the river, and said, “Make a bridge with your body over this river filled with leeches.” Naropa thought about the leeches in the river – worms that stick to you, bite into you and suck blood from you to fill their stomach.



With great devotion to his Lama, he wanted to obey and stretch his body over the river so his guru could walk over his body to cross the river, without getting bitten by the leeches.

But as soon as he stretched his arms out to grab a branch hanging over the other bank of the river, he fell in!

He quickly darted out of the river, but the leeches had already stuck to him, and started sucking his blood! He was worried and upset about what might happen to his body.

Tilopa said, "What happened to you?"

Naropa replied, "I fell into the water, and leeches are on my body. Therefore, I suffer without any choice."

Tilopa said, "The river of caring about the body may be drowned, Naropa. Look at the mirror of the one mind, the wish-fulfilling gem of the secret Tantra, the Secret Teachings of the Dakinis." He learned that he shouldn't worry about the body, but instead focus on the mind. And Tilopa gave him more teachings.

Naropa practiced these teachings for a year, and then returned to his guru and asked him for more teachings. Tilopa said, "If you need teachings, bring me a bamboo stick, fire and oil."

Tilopa then poured oil on the bamboo stick, lit it on fire, and stabbed Naropa's body with it!



When Naropa cried out in pain, Tilopa said, "What has happened to you?"

Naropa replied, "This body is full of grasping and desire, therefore I suffer."

Naropa realized that even though he previously had given up his desires and attachments, likes and dislikes, the body still felt pain and discomfort, so he still had desires to avoid pain and discomfort of the body.

Tilopa said, "The knot of this body, resulting from our karmas, may be destroyed, Naropa. The Secret Teachings of the Dakinis are the wish-fulfilling

Tantra. Look in the mirror of the heat and bliss in the mind.

So Tilopa taught him the complete instructions for Tummo, creating heat in the body to keep it warm, so he could avoid the discomfort of freezing cold weather.

Naropa practiced these teachings for one year, and again returned to his Lama, and requested further teachings. Tilopa was living in a cave at that time. He told Naropa, "Bring me cooked rice."

That seemed like a simple request! Naropa went off to a local family who was entertaining a large crowd of guests. There was a lot of food there, and when Naropa asked the family for some rice, they offered it to him and he took it back to his Lama.

Tilopa happily ate the rice, and then said, "Bring me some more."



Naropa replied, "They might not give me some more."

Tilopa said, "If they are unwilling to give you more, then take it by force."

Naropa went back to the same place, and saw that the guests had gone outside. He went into the empty house, and saw a pot of rice that looked even more delicious than the previous one. He took it and walked back to Tilopa.

But the guests saw him walking away with the pot of rice, and ran after

Naropa, the rice thief. He ran away, but the guests caught up with him and beat him fiercely.

Just then, Tilopa appeared, and said, "What has happened to you?"

Naropa replied, "I have been pounded like rice, therefore I suffer."

Tilopa said, "The body, the result of past good and bad karmas, may be beaten, Naropa. The Secret Teachings of the Dakinis are the wish-fulfilling Tantra. Look in the mirror of the dream in the mind."

Naropa realized that the body will suffer results of so many past karmas, but we shouldn't be upset by that. We can escape the results of karmas by deeply understanding the mind, which experiences life like a dream. And Tilopa gave him more teachings. And Naropa practiced them for a year, and returned to his Lama.

Tilopa led Naropa to a place where a man was carrying a heavy load on his back. Tilopa commanded Naropa, "Chase this man and beat him."

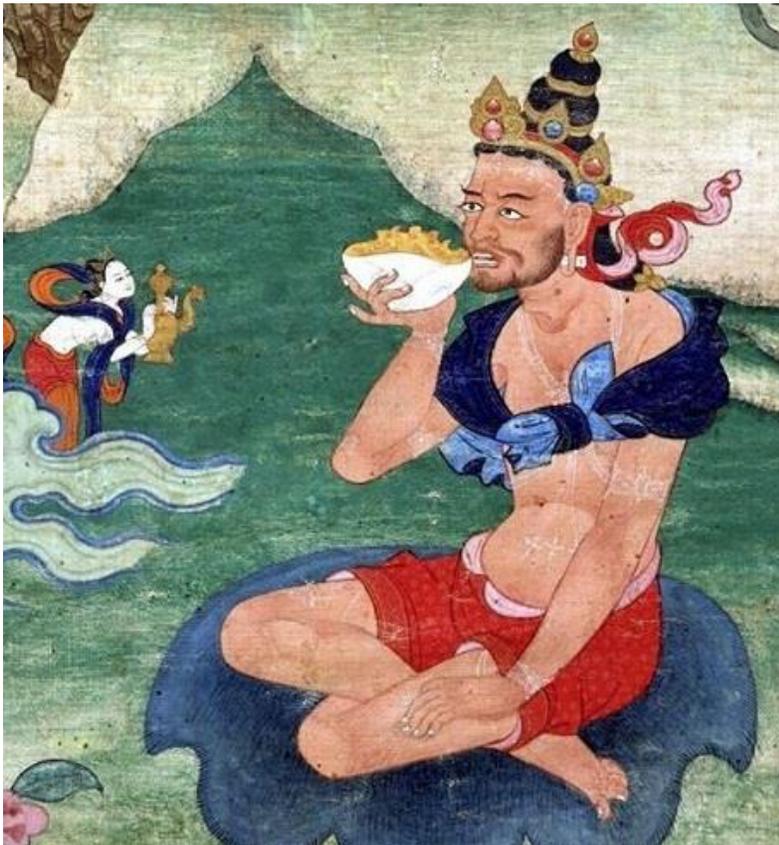
Naropa tried to obey, and chased the man around, trying to catch him. But he found that the man kept disappearing like a mirage, an illusion. Naropa was getting exhausted chasing after the man over and over. Tilopa saw that he was exhausted and said, "What has happened to you?"

Naropa replied, "I am like an animal chasing a mirage. Chasing that which doesn't exist, I suffer."

Tilopa said, "You can escape the cycles or rebirth, the six realms of samsara. The Secret Teachings of the Dakinis are the wish-fulfilling Tantra. Look in the mirror of complete liberation from illusion." Naropa realized that all the activity that we do is like an animal chasing a mirage. It will pass, it will be over, and gone. So instead we must learn what is the truth, what is beyond the illusion. And then he gave another special teaching for Naropa to practice.

In total, Naropa had twelve different experiences of obeying his Lama, even when he was told to do something that seemed very wrong, dangerous or outrageous. Tilopa gave him a very special teaching after each experience, and Naropa practiced each teaching for a year. So for twelve years, this is how Naropa learned and practiced what Tilopa taught him.

These 12 difficult experiences showed Naropa his remaining weaknesses. After the 12 years, Tilopa taught him Phowa, the technique of transferring consciousness at the time of death, from the body out through the top of the head, and taught him the Mahamudra technique of meditation. He became fully liberated from the cycle of birth and death, so he would not be born as a human again. He had reached the goal of spiritual practice.



Then he knew he must put the teachings into action to teach others. He took an empty skullcap – the top part of a human skull - as a bowl so he could beg for food, and in return he taught others the Dharma.

Tilopa one day told Naropa, "From Tibet, the Land of Snow, will come a man to whom you should give the teachings."

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Naropa jump from the roof as Tilopa asked him to, even though it was dangerous? (he trusted his Lama)
2. What did Naropa learn about the body, being like a clay pot, and being burned by fire? (it can break, be injured)
3. When Naropa learned not to worry about the body, like when it is being sucked on by leeches, what should we focus on instead? (the mind, and the teachings, Secret Teachings of the Dakinis)
4. From being poked with the burning stick, what did Naropa learn about desires that the body naturally has? (the body has desires to avoid pain and discomfort)
5. What did Naropa learn from chasing the man over and over again? (that we do activities that are like chasing a mirage, they will end, so we should learn the truth beyond the illusion)
6. How many years did Naropa learn a teaching from his Lama, and then practice for one year? (12)

DHARMA DISCUSSION – OBEDIENCE AND PATIENCE

“The precious gem of the mind depends on the vessel of the Lama.” Naropa (GKM p. 79).

Naropa was extremely obedient to his Lama, Tilopa. This seems ridiculous today to immediately obey someone without thinking first whether it is safe or the right thing to do. Tilopa appeared to be abusive, a criminal, injuring and torturing Naropa, and making Naropa steal and do other criminal acts.

But this kind of extreme obedience was based on the deep trust that Naropa had in his Lama. He knew that his Lama was very wise and had a pure heart, with no trace of selfishness. And he knew his Lama was testing him, and that he had to pass the tests to get the precious teachings.

What he told him to do wasn't random! By telling him to do these things, Tilopa was making Naropa get rid of the last bits of illusion in his mind, and his attachment to the body, to purify his mind and lead him to the highest wisdom.

In today's world, people don't just do what they are told like Naropa; they first ask “Why? What am I going to get out of this?”

So kids too think they don't have to obey.

They first ask “why?” or “What are you going to give me if I do it?”

We see many, many kids at school, in the neighborhood, or on TV, who are disobedient and also disrespectful to their parents, elders or their teachers.

It seems normal in today's world to disagree or argue with parents.

Kids are sophisticated with computers and electronics, and are quick to learn so many things, so they think their parents are not so modern, quick to understand, or knowledgeable.

And kids want to show how smart they are.

And kids are sometimes more obedient to friends than to their parents!

They follow what a friend or classmate does or tells them to do, because they want to be funny, or daring, make them laugh.

But it's often wrong, foolish, or annoying to others.

So of course we shouldn't obey other kids.

Who should we obey? Our parents, teachers, grandparents and other family elders.

If we are obedient to them, we avoid many mistakes and problems in our lives.

We may not always agree with them. We may think they don't understand modern society.

We may think they are much more strict or old-fashioned than other parents or teachers.

And there are some parents and elders who are actually very cruel, abusive or mentally ill.

But usually, our parents, teachers and elders have experience, wisdom, success and good values which they practiced and learned from.

And they deeply care for us and our happiness. That is why we should obey them.

What does it mean to be obedient?

It doesn't only mean to do what we're told

Also it means we should gently and respectfully accept advice, orders and instructions from our parents, teachers and older relatives. This means we don't whine, beg (plead), raise our voice, make unpleasant faces or remarks, argue, question, or insist on our way.

When asked to do something, we shouldn't say "Why do I have to?" or "Can't I do it later?" or "I always have to . . ." or "But she didn't have to do it" or some other reason starting with the word "But . . ."

Also, we shouldn't say "I already did it" when it was not done or not fully done, "I forgot to do it" when we really didn't forget, "I can't find it" when we didn't try hard to look for it, or "It's not working" when there is nothing wrong with it. This is being dishonest.

When asked to do something, we shouldn't say "It's too hard to do," or "I can't do that myself" or "I don't know how to do it" without really trying to do it.

To be obedient we should not be arrogant, thinking we know better than our elders and teachers. Sometimes, we may be correct. Sometimes, a parent or teacher may be incorrect.

But we should be humble and obedient to our parents and teachers and respect their advice even if we do not agree.

What should we do if our teacher, parent or elder has asked us to do something and we have a different idea? We can politely say, "Would it be OK if I . . .?" and if the answer is no, we must accept "no" as the answer. What should we do if our teacher, parent or elder has asked us to do something and there is an honestly good reason why we cannot obey? We can politely explain or show him or her the reason, but we should not argue, whine, plead, or insist on our way.

It may not be easy to follow the Buddha's teaching always, especially when we see other kids who are not so obedient. But being obedient and patient are some of the most important virtues for getting and keeping a good job, and therefore our success, peace and happiness in the future depends on our development of those virtues. We can only develop them if remember and practice them when we are young.

ACTIVITY

The popular game "Simon Says" changed to "Wise one says": Students stand up, facing one student who is the leader, who quickly gives the other students commands such as Wise one says touch your toes, Wise one says turn around, Wise one says touch your nose, Wise one says raise your hands, Wise one says hands on your hips, Wise one says jump, or Wise one says raise your right foot. Occasionally the student leader gives a command without saying "Wise one says." Students must obey immediately each command preceded by "Wise one says," but must not obey commands without it. Each student who obeys a command without "Wise one says" or who doesn't immediately obey a command with "Wise one says" must sit down and is out of the game. Commands can be given faster and faster to make the game more challenging. The last person out wins, and becomes the next leader. This game demonstrates obeying immediately the instructions of our parents, teachers and elders ("wise ones") and not blindly following what friends tell us to do.