

### CHAPTER 3 – CONTROL DESIRE

Little Konchog Gyaltsen loved his mother, who he called Ama, more than anyone in the world. She always spoke to him with kind words. She never hit him or even swatted at him no matter how naughty he was - not even when he had terrible temper tantrums and pulled her long hair, and not even when he once was crying and got so angry that he pushed her.

Dega was not only sweet in her personality, but in every way. She even smelled sweet. In the winter, when it was bitterly cold, walking outside meant that the strong wind would whip against her face. All the women got sunburned faces when they did their farm work outside in the bright sun in the high elevation of Tibet. And then in the winter, the harsh wind rushed across the mountains, stung their faces and damaged their skin.



So, many of them made a face cream to protect their skin. They made it with honey and brown sugar. It was difficult to get sugar in the remote village of Dong-go drong -- even more difficult to get than salt. So Dega was lucky when she could get some sugar to make her face cream. She mixed the ingredients and kept it safely in a little jar.



When she put the face cream on, she carefully spread a thin layer of the precious cream on her face, so she wouldn't use it up too fast. She kept it on for awhile, and then later washed it off. That kept the skin on her face healthy, moist and smooth.

It also smelled so good on her face! Little Konchog Gyaltsen, or Kon-Gyam as Dega called him, would put his face close to his mother's face and smell the sweet, lovely honey-like smell of her face cream. It was the most delicious smell!

He wanted to taste that face cream on his tongue. Kon-Gyam had never tasted candy or other sweets in his little remote village. So his mother's face cream was the sweetest thing he had ever smelled, and he really wanted to taste it!

One day, he was watching her put the cream on her face. He wanted so much to taste it, just a tiny bit. It smelled so sweet he couldn't resist. She finished smoothing the cream on her face, put the lid back on the jar, and put it on a shelf, smiling at her frowning little boy. Then he took her soft hand in his hands and licked her fingers. He licked her fingers clean, trying to savor every bit of sweetness from her fingers.

Later on, he looked at the jar of face cream on the shelf. He really wanted to grab it and taste a bit more of that face cream. But he didn't want his Ama to catch him with the jar in his hand. So he waited for a chance to taste it when she was away and wouldn't catch him.

One day when Dega was outside, he went to the shelf, reached up and took the face cream jar in his hands. He opened the lid, and smelled the lovely sweetness of the face cream. He would just take one little taste, so his mother wouldn't notice anything missing.



He licked a bit of the cream. Mmmm—mmm was it delicious! The best thing he ever tasted! He had to have another lick, and then another, and another. It was just too good!

He had to use his finger to get more out. It was so good, he couldn't stop.

Soon the jar was almost empty. Now his mother would surely notice how much face cream was gone from the jar, so he might as well just finish it up. He scooped the last bit on his finger and ate it. He quickly put lid back on, and put the jar back on the shelf.

When his mother later found the empty face cream jar, she knew that she didn't use it all up. She knew that her little son must have eaten it. But she didn't scold or punish him.

She eventually got more honey and brown sugar, and made a new jar of face cream. And she tried putting the jar in a different place. But her clever little son snuck into it again and ate it all up, to the very last bit!

This happened again and again, and still he was not scolded or punished. So he didn't really think about what his mother was thinking. He just thought she would make some more for herself.

One day some years later, when his mother came inside the house, he noticed her rosy red cheeks. It was freezing cold and very windy outside. He thought about how she would want to smooth on her face cream to soothe her dry, sore skin. And he remembered how in the past, he had eaten her

face cream, so she would have nothing to put on her face to soothe it. He felt guilty about what he had done. She must have known it was he who ate her face cream.

He loved his Ama so much. It burned his heart terribly that he did something that caused her to feel pain. Because he was so greedy for the sweet taste, he caused her to miss her soothing, healing face cream that she needed when her face was stinging and burning from the cold wind. And now he knew that she couldn't easily get honey and brown sugar to make more. It must have worried her that she might not be able to make more cream. The feeling in his heart was so intense that even decades later, when he became elderly, this was one of the clearest memories of his early childhood – how he had eaten with his mother's face cream.

QUESTIONS (answers in parentheses):

1. Why did Dega put face cream on her face? (to keep it healthy, smooth, moist; protect it from the cold wind)
2. How did Konchog Gyaltzen get tempted to eat the face cream from the jar? (he smelled it and tasted how sweet it was on his mother's fingers)
3. Why did Konchog Gyaltzen take more than a little taste of the face cream? (it tasted so good, he couldn't stop eating it)
4. Years later, how did he feel about having eaten the face cream? (guilty, burning in his heart)

DHARMA DISCUSSION – CONTROLLING DESIRE:

*“[N]o matter how hard we try, even if we get what we were striving for, it will not last. When we die, we are forced to let it all go. What will stay, however, are the negative imprints, the karmas we created in order to obtain worldly pleasures. . . . The attachment to taste is like the fish taking a baited hook. . . . In the beginning we enjoy ourselves, in the middle we experience misery, and in the end we will find no liberation . . . . In the beginning we are convinced that obtaining our object of desire will bring us satisfaction. When we get it, it becomes the cause of suffering. If the good qualities and the faults of an action are equal, or if the faults are predominant, you should not engage in the action. This is how you should consider before partaking of something pleasurable.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 48.*

*“When desire arises, you must not give in, but forbear . . . .If you lack patience, you will again and again fall under the power of these emotions. Diligent forbearance is mindful awareness.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 89.*

*“Food, wealth, clothes, home, friends, beautiful things, soft things, beautiful sounds, nice smells and tastes, and your beloved family: all these things cause torment by creating longing and desire. These are worldly delusions. The activities of grasping and clinging are endless.” From The Prayer of Kuntuzangpo*

Desire means wanting something. Wanting to have something, or wanting to do something. When we really really want to have something, we call it “craving.” What made Konchog Gyaltsen crave the face cream? It smelled sweet. He was tempted to try it. A temptation means when we notice something we really want. Maybe it’s a wonderful smell, or something that looks so cute, or fun, or pretty – so we want to have it. Konchog Gyaltsen’s desire started when he was tempted – when he smelled that sweet smell. And because he never got to eat sweets, he had such a big craving to taste it. And then when he tasted it, he couldn’t stop, because it tasted so good. Did you ever have a desire to eat something that smelled really good? Sometimes we want to have something or do something so much that we can’t control ourselves. Can you think of some examples of when you felt like that?

Sometimes we are so desperate or impatient to have it that we do something extreme to get it. Sometimes we see something we want and we just reach out and grab it. Like taking something from a brother or sister. Sometimes our desires can get us into trouble. When we don’t learn to control our desires, and if we want something very much, we may do something wrong to get it. For example, we might annoy someone or do something unfair, or maybe even hurt someone. You might take something that belongs to someone else. You might steal because you want something so much. That can become a habit - trying to get what you want, without thinking about how it affects others. That is how some people become thieves, or even murderers. So it is important to control our desires!

How do we do that? By being aware of when we really want something. This is mindful awareness. And then think, would it upset or hurt someone if I have it? Does it belong to someone else, or was it offered to me? Is it actually good for me to have it? Do I really need it?

**PRACTICE THIS WEEK:** Notice when you really, really want something. Then think about whether it is actually good for you to have it, whether it would upset or hurt someone if you have it, whether it belongs to someone else or was offered to you, or whether you really need it. For example, notice when you really want a certain favorite food, or popular toy or game.

**ACTIVITY:** With modeling clay (for example, “Sculpey” brand), make pinch pots to remind us of the face cream jar in the story. Instruct the students to be mindful of their feelings of desire as follows: Each student is given randomly a clay block, which may or may not be his or her preferred color. Prompt them to notice the feeling of desiring another color, or the feeling of getting what they want if they have the color they want. Then allow them to give back their clay block and choose a color they prefer. Then allow each student to trade half of their clay block with another student so they each get two colors to work with. Have them notice the feelings of working together, sharing what they have. Then have them notice the feelings of desire to be creative, to make something beautiful. If someone grabs a piece of clay without asking, reinforce the teaching in the story, of controlling our desires, and not taking what is not given!

**Modeling clay into a pinch pot.**

