

## THE LIFE OF MILAREPA Part 23 – Aggression and Bullying



Milarepa went to a place far away from any villages, called Nyishang Gurta, a very high, rugged mountain along the border of Tibet and Nepal. The mountain was always covered in thick fog and clouds, with snow or rain falling on it. Nearby were hills covered with rich grass, where grazing animals – deer, antelope, and wild sheep – would eat and play.



There was a beautiful forest nearby with many bright-colored flowers, peacocks, monkeys and langurs, which are a type of monkey with a dark face and fuzzy white fur around the face. Beautiful birds with lovely voices sang and made happy sounds. It was a delightful place, and perfect for meditation.

As Milarepa was meditating in a cave there one day, he heard the sound of a dog barking, and then he heard a loud crashing noise. He thought, "Up until now, my meditation has been wonderful in this place. But now, is there some kind of problem?"



He went outside the cave, and sat on top of a large boulder. He radiated great compassion to all beings in all directions around him.

Then suddenly, in front of him, a black deer approached. It moved as if it were terrified – it was quivering and its legs were shaking. It was sweating, and breathing loudly

and rapidly, its nostrils flaring wide. It was out of breath from running as fast as it could for a long distance.

Intense, great compassion arose in Milarepa's mind for the poor deer.

He thought, "It is because of previous bad karma that it was born in the body of this animal. He has not done anything wrong in this life, yet he must experience such unbearable suffering. What a pity! I will teach the Dharma and lead him to eternal happiness." He sang a song to the deer in a soft, gentle voice with a beautiful melody:

"I bow at the feet of Marpa the Translator;  
Grant your blessing that the suffering of beings be calmed.  
You, sentient being with a deer's body, listen here to Mila's song!  
Running away from what you see outside your body,  
You'll never be free from the confusion and ignorance inside your mind.  
You cannot get away from your body or mind;  
The time has come to give up confusion and ignorance. . . .  
If you want to escape, then escape with your inner mind itself.  
Let your mind itself escape to the land of enlightenment.  
Other ways of escape are only confusion. . . .

You hope that on the mountain's far side you'll be free;  
And you fear that on this side you'll be caught [by the dog].  
Because of your hopes and fears, you wander in samsara, and are not free.  
I'll teach you [the Dharma and meditation]."

So Milarepa taught the deer to escape - to get rid of fear - by using his mind to become enlightened. By the compassion of Milarepa, the deer calmed down, and his fear and suffering disappeared. With tears streaming from his eyes, he relaxed, licked Milarepa's clothes, and laid down and went to sleep against Milarepa's side.

Milarepa thought, "The barking I heard before must have come from a ferocious dog that wanted to harm this deer. I wonder what it is like."



Then a female dog approached, her tongue flapping from her mouth as she panted loudly from running fast.

Milarepa thought, "This dog that barks ferociously with great aggression and a mind that wants to harm, is the one who was chasing the deer. Whatever the dog sees, she thinks they are enemies. She always has aggression - barking, chasing and attacking other beings. How good it would be if I could calm her anger."

He sang a song to the dog, with a heart of great sorrow and compassion for her.

"I bow at the feet of Lord Marpa, grant your blessing that the aggression of beings be calmed.

You, sentient being with a dog's body and the face of a wolf,  
Listen here to Mila's song!

Whatever beings you see, you think they are your enemy;  
Aggression and wanting to hurt others agitate your mind. . . .  
But if you don't capture your own mind,  
How can capturing the bodies of others be of any help to you?  
If you want to catch something, it's time to catch your own mind.  
Give up your aggression . . . .  
The feeling of aggression and wanting to hurt others feels terrible to you.

. . . you fear you'll lose [what you have]. . .  
. . . you hope you will [get what you want] . . . .  
With hope and fear you wander in samsara.  
I'll teach you [the Dharma and meditation]."



This dharma song calmed the dog's aggression, so she whimpered and wagged her tail at Milarepa. She bowed and licked his clothes, and lay down on the other side of Milarepa, with her nose on her two front paws. With tears trickling down her face, she and the deer lay there sleeping as cozy as a mother and child with Milarepa as he sat on the ground.

Milarepa thought, "There must be a hunter following these two animals, and if he tracks them down, he will come here."



After a little while, a man with angry eyes arrived. He was holding the bottom of his chuba robe to keep it from getting caught on bushes and sharp rocks. He had a bow in his hand and arrows in a bag on his shoulder.

He was breathing heavily, and his head was covered with sweat. When he reached Milarepa, he was shocked to see the deer and dog lying close and cozy on each side of Milarepa. He thought, "Did this meditator do something bad to them?"

He became angry and shouted,

"These repas and yogis go all over the place! They're watching you up in the high snow mountains when you want to hunt animals, and they're down at the lakes watching you when you try to catch fish and otters.

And in between, they're watching you in the villages when you're trying to make money or fight."

Like a violent bully, he threatened, "If one or two yogis died, there wouldn't be any problem! You may be able to take my deer and dog, but let's see if your cotton cloth can take my arrow!"

He quickly took out an arrow, fitted it on his bow, and aimed it at Milarepa to kill him!

Milarepa thought, "If I can teach dharma to these animals who are naturally ignorant and they understand, then if I teach dharma to this human, he will understand too."



So he said, "Human, there is plenty of time to shoot arrows, so wait a few moments and listen to my song."

Then, with his mind immersed in wisdom, love and power, and with a beautiful melody, he sang a song with these words:

"I bow to you, Siddha Lord [Marpa],  
Grant your blessing that the five poisons [attachment, hatred, ignorance, pride and jealousy] be calmed.

You, sentient being with human body and face of a demon, listen here to Mila's song!  
It's said that human bodies are precious and rare,  
But to look at you, there's nothing rare at all.  
You have the body of a demon with much negativity.  
You pay no attention to the suffering of the hell-worlds, ghost world and animal world.  
You only work to get what you want in this life.  
But you won't get what you want through negativity.

If you give up your desires, you'll get spiritual powers. . . .  
The time has come to tame [control] your own mind.  
Killing this deer will not make you feel content.  
If you kill the five poisons in your mind [your attachment, hatred, ignorance, pride and jealousy], then you'll get what you wish.  
Although you overpower your enemies, there will only be more and more enemies.

If you tame your inner mind, there'll be no more enemies.  
Without wasting this life doing negative deeds,  
If you practice genuine Dharma, it would be excellent.  
I'll teach you [the Dharma and meditation]."

The man sat quietly and listened as Milarepa sang. The arrow had dropped off the bow, onto the ground. The man thought,

"I can't be completely sure about what he has said. Before, the deer would have been very frightened and the dog very aggressive. But I've never seen anything like this. Today, the two lie together on either side of this man like mother and child. As for me, I've never dropped an arrow, but here I've helplessly dropped one! Either this man is a master of black magic or he is truly a special guru. I should look and see how he lives so I can find out which one he is."

So he went into Milarepa's cave and saw that Milarepa had no food other than some roots and leaves. There were no belongings at all except a cooking pot and bowl. He started to believe that Milarepa was a true guru. Full of emotion, he staggered toward Milarepa, asking many questions:

"Lama, who is your guru? What type of dharma do you practice? Where do you come from? Who is your companion and what do you own? If I am acceptable to you, I will offer you the life of this deer and follow you as an attendant."

The man still thought the deer and dog belonged to him!

Milarepa answered, "My country and companions are just as you see. If you can follow me, then come on!" He explained in a song his lineage of gurus – Tilopa, Naropa and Marpa - and his refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. He explained that the mountains are his places of practice, and the monkeys, langurs and bears are his friends.

The hunter thought, "How he lives, and what his actions are – it is just as he says." Tears came from his eyes. He prostrated, bowing on the ground, and touched his head to Milarepa's feet in deep devotion. He offered to Milarepa all the belongings he had - his bow and arrow, his hunting coat, and rope, and even the dog and deer. Then he said,

"I and this dog here have committed many bad deeds. From now on we will not commit any negativity. I beg you to guide my dog to the heaven worlds, and this black deer to the path of bliss, and please teach me the dharma and lead me on the path of liberation. Guru, please accept me as a servant. I will go to my home and get supplies from my family and return. Will you stay here? Please tell me where you will be."

Milarepa was pleased with his offerings, knowing they were given wholeheartedly with great reverence, and he was pleased that the hunter's mind had turned toward the dharma. He said,

“Son, it is truly wonderful that you have given up negative deeds and that you will practice virtue. But probably it will be difficult for you to go home and then come back later as you intend. Even if you did, the place I stay is never certain, and it will be difficult for you to find me. So if you want to practice dharma, you should cut all ties to your family and follow me right now.”

The hunter said, “Such a guru is amazing, indeed! I wish to practice dharma from the depths of my heart. I will go to my family just to say a few words to them and gather a few provisions so I can practice meditation with you. I will return quickly! Please, remain here.”

Milarepa replied, “If you really want to practice dharma from the bottom of your heart, then meeting with your family is pointless. To practice dharma by living as a yogi, you don’t need to have any special provisions. Things like plants and fruits from the trees, they will do just fine as food. The time of death is uncertain. Besides, there is a danger that the good intent you have right now might change. You should stay here now. Before you go to speak with your family, first listen to my advice.” He sang a song with these words:

“A good friend may turn into your enemy. . .  
Those who you care for with kindness, later will fight with you.  
Your own negative action just harms yourself, according to karma . . .  
Among your family, it’s really yourself that you care about the most.  
This life is impermanent, you will soon die.  
It’s no good to put off practicing the dharma.  
The time has come to help yourself.  
The family you love will lead you into more rebirths in samsara.  
Now the time has come to follow a guru.  
You’ll be joyful in this life and happy in the next.  
The time has come to practice genuine dharma.”

When Milarepa sang this, the hunter decided to practice the dharma and not go back to his family. He received instructions from Milarepa and meditated, practiced with great effort and diligence, and gained great wisdom. He became known as Khyira Repa, one of the heart sons of Milarepa. The deer and the dog also got the blessings of never having to take a birth in a lower world.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. How was the deer feeling when it approached Milarepa? (frightened, terrified)
2. What was the dog’s attitude when it chased the deer? (aggressive, angry, harmful)
3. How did the hunter feel toward Milarepa when he first saw him? (angry)

4. What did Milarepa think about when the hunter threatened to kill him with his bow and arrow? (teaching him dharma)
5. Would the hunter feel content if he killed the deer, according to Milarepa? (no)
6. What did Milarepa say the hunter should learn to control? (his mind)

#### DHARMA DISCUSSION – Aggression and Bullying:

Quotations of Milarepa:

*“Whatever appearances there are, you take as your enemy;  
Aggression and malevolence [wishing to hurt others] agitate your mind. . . .”*

*“The affliction of aggression is so unbearable.  
. . . you fear you’ll lose . . .  
. . . you hope you will [get] . . . .  
With hope and fear you wander in samsara.”*

*“With bad karma and negativity, you bring suffering upon yourself.”*

*“A malicious-minded person has no chance for happiness.  
Frenzied thinking is the basis for disputes.”*

*“...[W]ith adverse conditions, like friends and enemies, you get into conflict.  
From time to time, give rise to compassion for sentient beings.”*

*“When the weapons of harsh speech fall upon you,  
Be on the lookout for your ears’ delusion.”*

*“...[W]ith adverse conditions, like friends and enemies, you get into conflict.  
From time to time, give rise to compassion for sentient beings.”*

*“You shouted horrible things to me. . . .  
But I trained my mind in the inner awareness . . .  
I meditated on impermanence and the suffering of samsara.  
I put deep trust in the Three Jewels - the Buddhas, Dharma and Sangha.  
And I developed careful attention toward karma, the law of cause and effect.  
By training my mind in Bodhicitta,  
I cut out the ignorance.”*

- Milarepa

The hunter was acting like a bully toward Milarepa.

He shouted angrily about yogis always watching people, threatened to kill him, and then aimed an arrow to kill him.

Since ancient times, always there have been bullies, in every country.

Now there are more bullies than ever – bullying is increasing among adults and children.

And in modern times, bullies don't suddenly become kind and respectful like the hunter in the story!

Many live their whole lives as narcissists – selfish, arrogant, and power hungry. No one can change them, and they have no real compassion or regret that would motivate them to change.

Bullies are people who crave power, who want to control others by hurting them.

What are some things that bullies do to overpower and manipulate others?

They ridicule, scare, intimidate, humiliate, insult, make fun of, mock (imitate) or pick on people; They gossip, spread rumors, make faces, laugh and make sarcastic or rude comments to make a person feel bad.

They injure or steal from a person, or force a person to do something, to show their power.

They exclude someone from a conversation or activity, to make the person feel left out.

They try to destroy a person's confidence; they try to make a person feel worthless, as if something is wrong with him or her.

Bullying makes them feel better – superior, confident, important, popular - by making others feel worse.

Bullies actually feel angry, inferior, or insecure, so they try to make others feel that way.

They push others down to raise themselves up, to make themselves appear powerful.

Although they may seem very confident, the fact is that they are not.

Inside, they feel agitated and unhappy.

They only feel better when they think they have power - when they can put others down, control and manipulate them.

Many of them come from families that are unloving or abusive, frequently shouting and insulting each other. They may have a parent who ignores or bullies them, so they bully others.

They didn't learn compassion or respect for others, maybe because their parent didn't have it.

As is often said, "Hurt people [who hurt inside] hurt people [hurt others]."

What can we do to avoid being bullied?

Of course, we try to stay away from bullies – avoid them, ignore them, walk away from them.

If you are faced with bullying, sometimes it's hard to think clearly or know what to do.

They want to get a reaction from you – they want to make you angry, scared, or upset.

So, try to avoid giving them a reaction.

Remember not to argue or say anything insulting or negative back to the bully, as that may provoke him to bully even more.

Instead, act confident and calm, even if that isn't how you feel.

To calm yourself and show confidence, think of a mantra, like "Om Ah Hung" or "Om Mani Padme Hung," or a word or phrase you like, and repeat it silently to yourself.

Remember, the bully's words and behavior are his way of pushing his own insecurities onto you. They don't reflect who you are, they reflect who he is: someone with an injured mind.

Say "stop," "leave me alone," "that's not nice," or "don't talk to me" in a strong, firm voice.

Involve others. Tell your parents, teachers, counselor or other trusted adult.

Telling about bullying is NOT tattling. It is a serious problem, and there are laws and policies that your school is required to follow to stop bullying.

Ask friends to help you if you are bullied, and offer to help them if they are bullied.

Here are some other ideas to try if you are bullied:

Act bored, as if the bully's words mean nothing to you.

Laugh in a funny way when someone bullies you.

Agree with what the bully says, and maybe you can turn it into something funny.

For example, if the bully makes fun of your weight, say "Am I overweight? Oh, I didn't notice."

Say "you're so nice" or "are you done?" in a somewhat sarcastic, bored voice to show that what he says doesn't upset you.

Visualize a shield all around you, and imagine that when the bully speaks, his or her words bounce off the shield right back on him or her.

Think of the bully's words as their own painful emotions coming out of their mouth.

Remember that the bully's unkind words are negative karma, which will bounce back to hurt the bully in the future.

Remember that you have a good future on the path of dharma, and they haven't reached the path yet and are full of the five poisons - attachment, hatred, ignorance, pride and jealousy.

Practice compassion for bullies by simply wishing they be peaceful and happy, so they will have no reason to be a bully. Although many kids grow up to be adult bullies (or narcissists) and remain that way their whole life, there are some that can change and stop bullying. In any case, you help yourself become more confident and happy by practicing compassion.

Watch your own behavior.

Are there instances when you may have seemed to be a bit of a bully without realizing it?

Maybe without intending any harm, at times we may have done or said something that made a person feel insulted, embarrassed, scared or left out, or in some situations we were too bossy, snarky or controlling. We should try to notice and correct our own behaviors and not only judge behavior of others.

ACTIVITY – Role play:

1. Practice Responding: Reflect on how you might react to bullying in the future and rehearse those responses with a friend or adult. Think about what strategies have worked or fallen short, and don't give up if your first response is not successful.
2. Group activity: Students form pairs. One student says or does something like a bully. The other says aloud a thought that might calm his mind, and then says something in response to the bully.