

CHAPTER 14 – GENEROSITY

In the area of the Gar Gon monastery, there lived many young monks who had little food to eat, and some had only a few warm clothes to wear. Many of them came from poor families. But many had no parents. They were born to very young mothers who were not married and who didn't know how to raise a child. So they gave their young children to the monastery so they would be cared for and protected by the monks, like a foster home. The little boys then became little monks.

One of these little monks was named Mishik Dorje. Everyone noticed his kind, friendly nature and how well he performed his duties. And everyone said he was a very good little monk. But he had no parents. The monastery was his home ever since he could remember, and the monks were his only family and relatives. He was like a lost child because he had no home to visit.

Garchen Rinpoche's room was on the second floor of the temple, and right outside his window was a courtyard where small groups of monks sometimes gathered to teach and practice a religious lama dance, called *cham*. The lamas perform this dance as part of a ceremony or in a meditative ritual. Usually as they act out a story from religious history, or they act out a holy ritual. They wear masks of wisdom deities or great masters of the past. Their outfits were very colorful, and their dance moves were very intricate, carefully and gracefully performed. There were sounds of long trumpets, and cymbals, and drums. The courtyard seemed to transform into a spectacular theater when the monks were practicing *cham*.



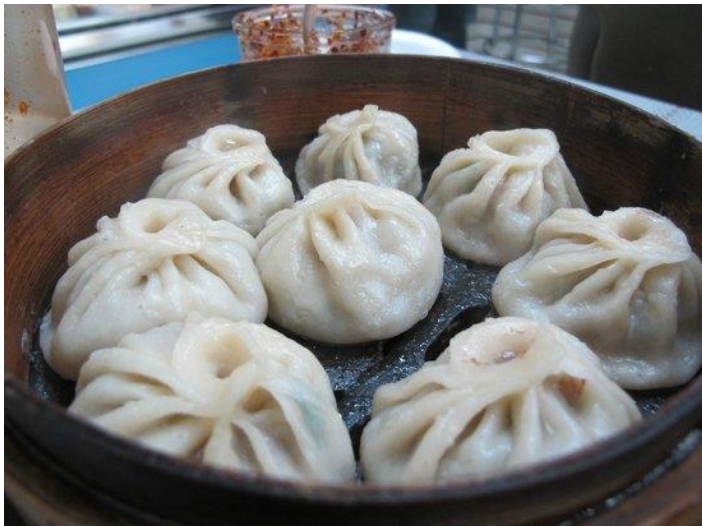
One day, as the young Garchen Rinpoche was getting ready to have lunch in his room, he looked out of his window. There was no lama dance going on; there were just some young monks gathered together in the bright sunshine in the courtyard.



Suddenly, he caught sight of a young monk's very dark eyes. He noticed nothing else except the little boy's dark, dark eyes. It was Mishik Dorje.

They both gazed at each other, motionless, without saying anything. This was the first time they saw each other. They seemed not to hear, think or feel anything – they only saw each other's eyes. Garchen Rinpoche thought, for a split second, that this little monk doesn't know who he is, a tulku who would become the head of the monastery one day.

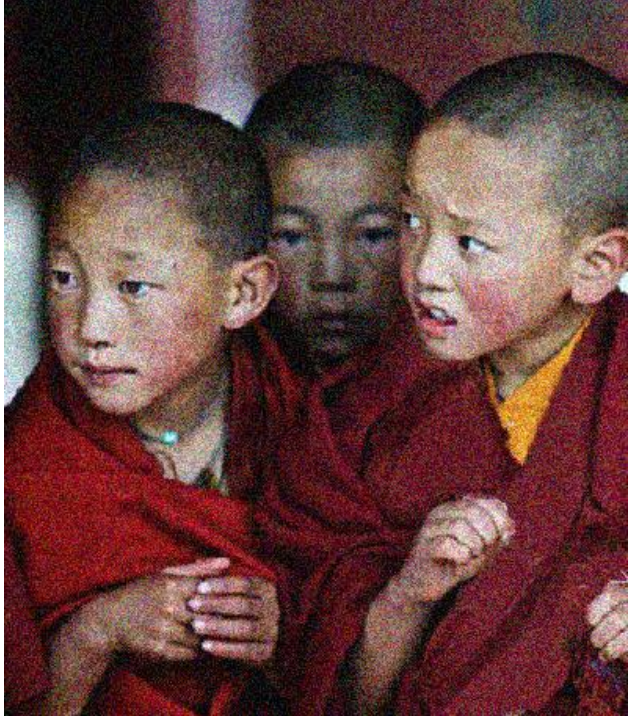
Then the young tulku realized something very clearly. This little monk was hungry!



At that very instant, the little Garchen Rinpoche reached out his hand to grab the few steamed *momo* dumplings from his bowl.

He quickly wrapped them in a piece of cloth, and threw the ball of cloth out his window. Little Mishik Dorje caught it, and looked up at the window. But Garchen Rinpoche was no longer at the window.

In the next days, the young tulku anxiously made plans for how he could hand the leftovers from his lunch tray to his new little friend without anyone else knowing about it. Each day, when it was time for lunch, Garchen Rinpoche looked out of his window into the courtyard to see if his new friend was there. Little Mishik Dorje often was there in the courtyard, glancing up at him. And Garchen Rinpoche quickly and happily tossed the food down to him without anyone else noticing.



But on another day, Garchen Rinpoche looked down out of his window and saw Mishik Dorje in the courtyard with a couple of other shy-looking little novice monks. They silently clung to each other, which was a comfort to each of these young monks, who had no parents or other family members to cling to.

At first, Garchen Rinpoche felt a little shock, thinking “There are too many of them!” He had not even started eating, and he did not plan to give his meal away completely.

But something deep inside of him began to give in. He felt, in a way, a sense of responsibility for these poor little monks. The toughness that he had for many years as a young village boy began to melt away, and he developed unusual feelings of tenderness and compassion for these little monks.

Giving his lunch to them made him feel stronger, in a way, than he had ever felt, and happier, as he saw the joy arise in the little monks’ eyes.

Many years later, he would come to understand that these feelings were his inborn warm nature of lovingkindness and compassion that he had developed over many lifetimes. They were beginning to blossom again in his heart.

And over time, many of the little monks at the monastery – his companions on the Buddhist monk’s path – would wait in the courtyard for the little tulku to throw down his food from the window.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did some of the young monks have very little food to eat? (they came from poor families or were left at the monastery by young unmarried mothers)
2. How did Garchen Rinpoche and Mishik Dorje first meet each other? (when they looked at each other silently as Garchen Rinpoche looked out his window)
3. Did Mishik Dorje tell Garchen Rinpoche that he was hungry? (no, he didn’t speak at all. Garchen Rinpoche just knew it)
4. Why do you think Garchen Rinpoche had to give the food to the monks secretly, without others knowing about it? (he was expected to eat the food offered to him)

5. What did Garchen Rinpoche think when there were other little monks with Mishik Dorje? (that there were too many monks and he didn't have enough leftovers for them all)
6. What did Garchen Rinpoche do to feed the hungry little monks? (he gave his lunch to them)

DHARMA DISCUSSION - GENEROSITY:

“The practice of the six perfections is really the foundation of the Mahayana. The first is generosity, which is a supreme method for clearing away self-clinging. If we possess something that is very precious, then we tend to think, ‘I own this thing, this is mine,’ and we think this again and again. This reinforces the concept, and as time goes by we really become attached. In fact we become so attached that we wouldn’t be willing to give it away to anyone else....The tighter we hold, the more it binds us.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 58.

“When you see how your love touches others, it will become your happiness to give your happiness away.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 108.

“In order to avoid causes of suffering, we must give up self-cherishing attitudes and cultivate an altruistic mind that seeks the benefit of others.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 2.

“It is most important to cultivate a wish to help others.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 87

“When we have the thought – how can I benefit this other person – then we are practicing the Dharma. Then wherever we go we can continue to accumulate virtue, we can continue to accumulate compassion.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 91

“...[W]hen we have the mind of lovingkindness and compassion and we recite even one mantra for the purpose of sentient beings, then that becomes the offering [or generosity] of speech.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 93.

How did Garchen Rinpoche feel after giving his lunch to the little monks?

He felt stronger and happier.

What do we mean by feeling stronger? He felt stronger because he could help others; he was strong enough to give up his own food, and to give up the feeling of “this is mine.”

But really, how could he feel happier by giving up his own lunch? He felt the happiness of seeing the joy that others feel when you give something nice to them.

And, instead of being like a regular young boy who likes to compete with other boys to try to be better than they are, or have better things than they have, he began to think more and more about how others feel, what they need, and how he can help them.

So he had a feeling of compassion for Mishik Dorje, knowing he was hungry, and he immediately put his compassion into action by giving his food to him.

What is compassion, exactly? Understanding the suffering of another being, and wishing to take away their suffering.

So when you feel compassion for someone, you understand how they feel, and you think, “how can I help this person?”

You see if there is something you can do to help them.

If there is something you can give to help take away their suffering, then that is generosity, putting your compassion into action.

This is real practice of Dharma.

What is generosity? Giving with a good heart. Giving because you care about how someone else feels. Not thinking about what *you* want, but thinking about what someone else wants, and giving it to them.

What kinds of things can we give? We can share our food, we can share our toys, we can give someone a toy to keep.

But we can also give our time and attention! And we can give kind words! For example:

If someone seems lonely or bored, we can talk to them.

If someone seems scared or upset we can go near them, and maybe smile or talk to them.

If someone is tense, irritable, sick or not feeling well, we can silently chant “Om Mani Padme Hum” and wish they feel better.

It is most important to have a wish to help others.

Just remembering to wish for others to be happy and peaceful, and look for ways that we can be of help to others, is the way to develop a compassionate and generous mind.

Generosity helps us to get rid of selfishness and attachment, so we break the habit of thinking, “Mine, this is mine!” which actually makes us feel stressed. We don’t just try to find happiness by having more and more things and keeping things for ourselves.

Instead, we learn to find happiness in making others happy.

Having something to give to others, even if it’s just our kind words, makes us feel more confident and reduces feelings of depression or low self-esteem (feeling unimportant).

Generosity is the first of the 6 Paramitas, the 6 Perfections, very important Dharma practices.

They are: Generosity, Morality, Patience, Perseverance, Meditation, and Wisdom.

PRACTICE THIS WEEK: Find new ways to be generous at home. Notice what your mother or father might like help with, and give a few moments of your time to help. Try to do it every day!

ACTIVITY: Make a poster with a quotation from Garchen Rinpoche, such as

“It is most important to cultivate a wish to help others,”

or “When you see how your love touches others, it will become your happiness to give your happiness away”

or “When we have the thought – how can I benefit this other person – then we are practicing the Dharma.”

Write the quotation first in pencil, centered nicely on the poster paper, and then go over it with marker. Then decorate it – with plastic jewels, sequins, hearts, stickers, drawings. Then hang it in your bedroom or on the refrigerator as a reminder to be generous.