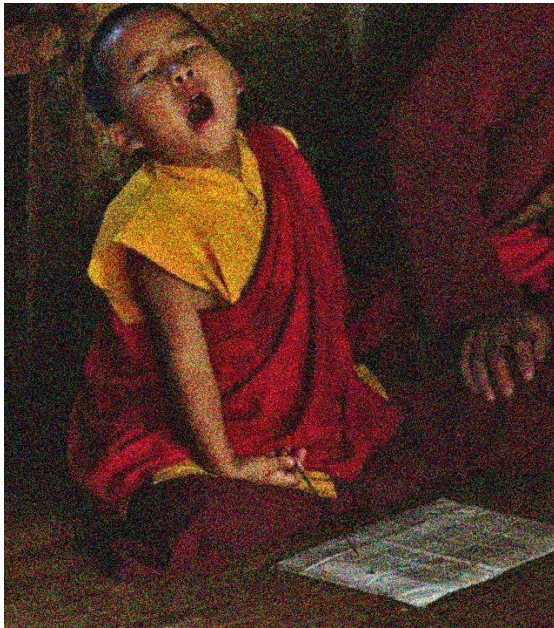


CHAPTER 8 – ANGER

Garchen Rinpoche's parents both stayed at the monastery, but even though they had now gotten married, his mother stayed in a different room. She cooked for her husband and son, and brought them butter tea.

Day after day, the young Garchen Rinpoche had the same routine with his father. He had to concentrate on studying and reciting scriptures in the same room with his father every day. He could not get away from his studies or avoid his father. He couldn't take his own breaks and play around. In the texts he had to read and recite, he was constantly reminded that life is suffering, the First Noble Truth, and the way to end suffering from the cycle of birth and death, the Fourth Noble Truth.

But he didn't have to read it to understand that life was suffering. He was living a life of suffering every day! He had to obey all his father's demands from the minute he opened his eyes in the morning until he laid down to sleep at night. On top of that, his father scolded him for every little thing he did that wasn't perfect. Even worse, his father often became angry, and sometimes was filled with rage if the little tulku didn't do what he was supposed to do.



Sometimes all the studying made Garchen Rinpoche feel sleepy. Occasionally his head nodded, his chin drooped to his chest, and then his body slumped over.

Or he just wanted to rest his head on his book for a moment, and then he fell asleep with his head on his book.

Sometimes when he was reciting the long prayers, he started to just mumble them, and then drifted off to sleep sitting up.

Whenever he fell asleep or nodded off, his father noticed and immediately responded. If his father was feeling peaceful, he would get a cup of water and place it on his son's head.



But if his father was feeling angry, he immediately got out his cane and smacked young Rinpoche to shock him out of his sleep. "The little tulku should not be lazy!" his father thought.

Even his mother had to suffer from the anger of her husband. Sometimes while she was serving him butter tea, something she said or did greatly annoyed him. Then he grabbed his cane from where he kept it under a cushion, and smacked her with it. And only afterward he told her what she did that made him angry.



Often, when he was beating Garchen Rinpoche with the cane, Dega stepped in and tried to rescue her wailing son. She repeatedly begged, “Please don’t hit him, please don’t hit him,” as tears streamed down her face.

The father thought, “She is interfering! This boy needs discipline and he won’t learn unless I beat it into him. She is just causing him confusion by interfering.” The father became more infuriated and smacked both mother and child with the cane!



Garchen Rinpoche thought, “There is nothing worse than living the life of a Rinpoche.”

Sometimes the father got so angry at his son that he yelled at him, “You are supposed to be a tulku but you look and act like a demon!”



And Garchen Rinpoche thought that his father was just like the ferocious, merciless Marpa, the guru of Milarepa.

Little Garchen Rinpoche disliked Marpa. He hated the idea of Milarepa having to suffer so much from his own guru.

He learned about Marpa and Milarepa from reading about them in the books in the monastery.

Milarepa’s father got sick and died when Milarepa was a young boy, and then he and his mother and sister had to live with his aunt and uncle, who made them into slaves! They made Milarepa and his mother and sister do hard labor, humiliated them and barely gave them any food.

After years of being mistreated like that, Milarepa's mother became so angry that she told Milarepa to go to a teacher to study black magic, so that he could take revenge against his aunt and uncle. Milarepa went to a teacher who taught him very powerful sorcery. Milarepa did as his mother wanted him to do, and cast spells on his uncle's family. The spells killed 35 people on a wedding day, and burned and destroyed all their crops. While his mother was glad he did it, Milarepa felt terribly guilty and miserable afterward.



So Milarepa went to find a great guru, Marpa, who could help him purify his mind.

(Here is a painting of Marpa).

But, Marpa wouldn't just give him teachings or initiation right away. He told Milarepa that first he must build a large brick tower with his own hands!

Milarepa had to dig earth, make the bricks from clay, and carry heavy rocks on his back like a donkey. Then after he almost completed it, and thought his guru would be pleased, Marpa ordered him to destroy it with his own hands!

Milarepa had to take all the bricks back to where he had found the clay. Then, Marpa told him to build another tower. And when Milarepa was almost finished, Marpa again told him to destroy it! Milarepa built yet another tower for Marpa, and then again he had to destroy it!

During all that backbreaking hard work carrying all those bricks and stones, his back became covered with bleeding infected sores. Milarepa was so miserable that he cried day and night, and tried to run away, several times.



Sometimes he wanted to die. And not only that, but Marpa beat and humiliated Milarepa for any small thing!

After years of building and taking apart those three big towers, Marpa made him build a fourth tower, nine stories high, that he would not have to tear down.

This tower is still standing today in southern Tibet, near Bhutan.



By all that that extreme hard work and suffering, Milarepa perfected the virtue of patience and completely purified the karma of his past evil deeds so he wouldn't have to suffer any more results of his bad karma.

And then Marpa was very happy with Milarepa and taught him the most secret teachings, making him his very special student to be able to give the Kagyu teachings to others.

As a result of all the work to purify his mind and receiving the teachings from the great guru Marpa, Milarepa become enlightened.

But Garchen Rinpoche didn't understand how Marpa could be a great teacher. He thought of him as Marpa the Terrifier. And he thought his father was like Marpa. He felt angry toward Marpa for torturing Milarepa, and felt angry at his father for torturing him and hurting his mother.

QUESTIONS:

1. How did Garchen Rinpoche's father wake him up when he fell asleep studying? (placing a cup of water on his head or hitting him with a cane)
2. How was Garchen Rinpoche's father similar to Marpa? (they were extremely demanding and strict, and got angry at their students and beat them)
3. How did Milarepa kill his uncle's family? (by black magic)
4. Why did he kill the family? (his mother was angry at them and wanted revenge)
5. Why did Marpa make Milarepa build and then destroy three towers? (so he would learn patience, purify his mind and not have to suffer results of his evil deeds)
6. What did Marpa finally give Milarepa after the fourth tower was built? (taught him the most secret teachings)

DHARMA DISCUSSION – ANGER

“When external objects appear, the subtle consciousness of fear will arise. From this fear, the habit of anger becomes stronger and stronger.... [W]hen strong anger arises for you, neither reject nor accept it. Instead, relax in the natural state and achieve the wisdom of clarity!”

From The Prayer of Kuntuzangpo

“Generally, when we get angry at someone, we remember that interaction, and the next time we see them we remember it again, and each time we see them, we reinforce the habit of that anger....But, when from the very start, we recognize mind’s nature on the arising of that anger, the negative emotion itself dissipates.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 102.

“Everything follows the law of karma naturally....If your family members treat you bad in this life, it is the result or karmic creditor of your own past actions. We are all responsible for our own karma, we ourselves have created the causes for all our experiences. Enemies, obstructers, mischievous relatives, etc., are only conditions but not the cause. Moreover, the past is gone, it doesn’t exist any longer, we cannot change the past, we have to let it go, so do not think about this. What is more important is that which is actually in your hands, the future....If you think about others’ faults you will only get angry and resentful. Think about their [good] qualities and stop thinking about their faults, then love will arise. If you can’t stop the thoughts, think of Tara and recite her mantra.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 90.

“...[I]f we understand that we owe these beings a karmic debt, then instead of having aversion towards them, we can recognize them as being even more kind than our own parents [because they give us the opportunity to purify our negative karma and to practice patience]....The Buddha himself taught that the real enemy is anger itself, which is conquered through practicing patience....[W]e generate patience and eventually loving-kindness and bodhicitta towards them.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 77.

“When you are angry, you will never be happy. It will even influence your dreams and you will have nightmares....When I was young, I was very short-tempered and I had horrible dreams. But my root teacher taught me compassion and I no longer have bad dreams.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 84.

“As your patience increases, you can take a vow: ‘No matter how much they provoke me, I shall not get angry.’ This is the essence of the Bodhisattva vows.” Garchen Rinpoche, Quote 89.

In the story, Marpa and Garchen Rinpoche’s father used their anger to teach in a very harsh way. They were adults who were wise, and used their anger to make their student become extremely disciplined.

But that doesn’t mean it’s okay for us to have uncontrolled anger -- temper tantrums.

If we don’t control our anger, it can make us say or do things we regret – bad karmas that cause us more suffering.

So how do we control it?

First, notice when you are angry. Say it to yourself when you feel it – “I feel angry”

It’s okay to feel anger – and it is good to admit to ourselves when we feel angry.

The more you notice when you are angry – maybe just a little angry – annoyed, frustrated, irritated – then the easier it is to learn to calm your anger.

Second, use a method to calm your anger. The more often you do it, the faster your anger will disappear in the future whenever you get angry.

Here are some methods:

Drink a glass of cool water – for an immediate distraction from anger.

Practice mindfulness. Take deep breaths, notice all the sensations of breathing in, breathing out.

Be like a scientist. Observe what your body is feeling – is your heart going faster? Are you breathing faster? Is your stomach tense? Are you moving restlessly? Do you feel discomfort? How many minutes do you think you will feel angry? Give yourself a few minutes, and then after that, decide that you're done being angry, because you don't want to feel angry anymore.

Remember anger is impermanent - Let your anger go away quickly, don't let it ruin your day!

Remember everyone is the owner of their karma

If someone was unfair or unkind to you, avoid feeling revengeful. Don't think about how you can get them back.

Instead, remember that they will suffer the results of their own karma automatically.

A person hurts another because he himself is feeling bad. So he wants others to feel bad too.

So have compassion for him, because he is feeling bad.

Maybe someone was unfair or disrespectful to you because you were unfair or disrespectful in your past, maybe in a past life.

If you don't react with angry words or actions, this is good karma for you!

But it's okay to let them know you don't like what they said or did.

If you are angry at someone, saying angry words might only make them angrier, and they may try even more to hurt you.

Instead, have compassion for them, because they haven't learned how to avoid hurting others, and they will have to suffer the results of their karmas.

Think of their good qualities - Try to think of any good qualities about the person you are angry at, or think of some good things that they did, or good skills that they have.

Chant a mantra - Chant aloud or silently, "Om Mani Padme Hum" and think of the compassionate Chenrezig. Or think of Tara and chant one of her mantras

Analyze your anger - Usually, if you think about it carefully, anger arises because of fear. There is something that you are afraid of. So, begin to analyze where the anger came from:

Who made you angry? What did they do to make you angry?

What is it that you don't like?

What is it that you want, that you don't have?

What might happen, that you don't want to happen?

Then you might find that you are angry because you are afraid someone might harm you, embarrass you, control you, or take something from you.

Or you are afraid that you might lose something, not get something you need, or that something bad might happen.

Next, think– is there something you should do to protect yourself from harm? Is there any good reason to continue being angry?

Go outside or take a walk - notice some beautiful things around you.

Exercise – for example, jump rope, basketball, play with a soccer ball, skateboard.

Take a nap - after resting you often feel better.

Take a shower - cleaning the body makes your mind feel calm and clean.

Listen to music – it relaxes you, helps make your emotions more positive.

Journaling – write down your thoughts, only for yourself - you can throw it away later.

Make a cartoon picture – make a funny picture of what is making you feel angry – you can laugh and throw it away later.

PRACTICE THIS WEEK:

Make a list of things or people that typically make you feel angry or irritable.

Then try to notice times this week when you start to feel angry.

And, try applying one or more of the methods above to help you get over your anger or irritability. At the end of the week, write a new list of things that actually made you feel angry or irritable this week, and the methods you tried to reduce your anger.

Were there any items on your second list that match your first list?

Did any of the methods help you to reduce your anger or irritability?

ACTIVITY:

Card game like “Old Maid” renamed “Silly Goose”: Each student makes a picture of a person with an angry face on the left half of an index card and a person with a smiling face on the right half of the card. Below the picture of the angry face, student writes something that makes them angry. Below the picture of the smiling face, student writes an appropriate method to calm down. Cut the cards in half so each picture (along with the accompanying text) is on a separate piece.

Shuffle the cards and deal them all to the students. Holding their cards like a fan without letting others see their cards, students select any matching pairs in their hand and put them face up in front of them, and read aloud the text on the pairs of cards (read text on the angry face first). Each student holds up his hand of cards and first one to play draws a card from the student to his right.

If he has a matching card, then he places them face up in front of him and reads them aloud. If not, he keeps the card in his hand. The student on the right then takes a turn, and so on around the table.

The object of the game is to “get rid of all your anger” by getting rid of all your cards by matching them. The first one without any cards wins. The one with the most matches is the second winner. The student holding the Silly Goose is, well, the silly goose!