

THE LIFE OF MILAREPA Part 26 – Forgetting Commitments and Laziness

It was a month after the five worldly yaksha dakinis had met with Milarepa. The arrogant chiefs of the spirits, ghosts and demons who had tried to harm Milarepa now were returning to meet him. With them came the five dakinis, who had first met him in monstrous forms, but who now transformed into very beautiful young women. They were dressed in flowing dresses, wearing precious jewels and exquisite necklaces. Large groups of assistants accompanied them.



They tossed many kinds of flowers down on Milarepa as they arrived, and also offered him incense, music, and many types of food and drinks. The five women said to him,

“Jetsun (Holy One), it is said that there is no other refuge than the ultimate realization that has come from your mind – this refuge of the ultimate path, the intention of the buddhas of the past, present and future. Please teach the Dharma to the spirits, ghosts and demons who are assembled here.”

Milarepa first wanted to get their complete attention before he began his teaching. So, he sang:

“Before, you tried to harm me, and laughed while shouting insults.
You ordinary, worldly spirits and demons,
Extremely arrogant and disrespectful,

Who wandered here to inspect this yogi.
Is it not you who have gathered here today?
. . . Listen carefully to the words I say:
If they are words of truth, then everyone listen!
This is not mere idle chatter, listen to this song!

Then he taught them in his song about different levels of wisdom as the Buddha taught. From among the big crowd of different beings listening to his teachings, the five dakinis sang about the great qualities, wisdom and wonders of Milarepa.

They ended their song saying, “May we follow you and be your servants!”

But Milarepa thought, “These worldly dakinis and demons are savage and extremely difficult to tame - they must promise to stop harming others and they must have discipline!”

He said to them, “Beautiful ones, it is wonderful that you have expressed your faith and devotion to me and that you intend to have compassion from now on. Here, so far, I have taught you the path with the vows of Bodhicitta. But also, there is a special, quick path, a teaching that has many methods and is not difficult. I will give you the empowerment and the practices of the Vajrayana. Each of you should offer to me your life-force. Arrange tormas and whatever you have to offer.” Tormas are cake offerings shaped like cones (see photo).



They were so happy! They arranged many, many offerings and tormas. They bowed, prostrating on the ground and walked around him in devotion. Then each of them graciously offered her life-force and sat next to him. Milarepa gave them mantras and empowerments of Red Tara for them to practice.

He explained, “Beautiful ones, from now on, all of us gathered here are bound together as master and students. This connection is a samaya - a promise, commitment - that you will practice what I have taught. Therefore, in whatever you do, always meditate with the guru at the crown of your head. Whatever happens, whether good or bad, your refuges (that which saves you) are the Three Jewels – the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Whoever you see, whatever beings you see, you should treat them with lovingkindness and care. It is not okay, even for a moment, to insult, abuse, hurt or harm anyone.”

The dakinis said, “Giving us the special practices is extremely kind. Our impure minds since the beginning of time have had bad habits, and now we have taken low births of women with low intelligence. So, what you have taught us has not yet sunk into our minds; however, we will try hard and train gradually. We will not harm other sentient beings. We will help and support the people in the nearby lands with whatever comforts we can provide. In particular, we will protect and guard those beings who follow your teaching and we will keep them fully hidden from harmful spirits and people. We will be your servants and provide whatever good conditions are necessary.”

After making these commitments, they walked around him and prostrated with great devotion. And then they flew into the sky and disappeared.

Many months later, Milarepa was still meditating in a place called Chuwar Valley near the mountain called Tashi Tseringma. In the villages of that area, people were falling sick with many types of diseases. Many people and animals died from the diseases.

One evening as it was getting dark, a radiant and beautiful lady came to visit Milarepa. She was wearing an exquisite white silk dress decorated with flame designs. She bowed down, took his feet to her head in deep respect, walked around him seven times, and prostrated nine times. She said,

“Jetsun (Holy One), our queen has become extremely ill. Please come to the other side of the snow mountain.”

Milarepa replied, “It’s getting late in the day, so I will not go now. You can stay here for the night. Tomorrow morning, you and I will go back together.”

The lady said, “We can go by the Miraculous Light Path; it will not be difficult. Please, you must come today!”

Milarepa replied, “Where is this road? I am an old man, and I have never seen such a road before. Which direction is it? You be my guide.”

Then she pulled a white wool blanket from her side, and lifted it toward the sky. She said, “Get on top of this blanket and it will carry us there.”



As soon as Milarepa had placed one foot on the blanket, in an instant - like a flash of lightening- they went off. When they began to float downward he saw on the left slope of the Tashi Tseringma mountain a white silken tent with golden drapes, strung with ropes of sapphire and staked with conch shells held down with coral tent pegs. This was not the tent of a human being! He slowly entered the tent. Laying on a bed, he saw a beautiful lady with many long braids that wrapped around her body and reached the floor. One of her eyes was extremely bloodshot.



She said to Milarepa, “Jetsun (Holy One), I’ve become extremely sick; I ask you to please help me.”

Milarepa recognized her as Tashi Tseringma, the leader of the five worldly yaksha dakinis. He carefully asked her,

“What has caused your sickness? How long have you not been well? What is your condition now?”

She answered, “As to the condition for my becoming ill, last summer there were men who are animal herders who lit a great bonfire in which they burned bodies. The smoke from the fire caused me to become ill. As to when, it was last autumn that I became a bit unwell. Then the illness became extremely painful, and so I called for you, Jetsun, to come. Because of my own breath, many humans have become very ill here in this land, and it has caused great disturbance here. This is the way things are now.”

When Milarepa heard this, he thought, “This woman is the cause of the diseases in the area. It is not possible for me to help anyone at this point. Right now, she must keep to her previous commitment.” He knew that she was very powerful, and that she could have prevented the people from getting sick if she wanted to.

He said to her, “Beautiful one, previously I gave you the practices of the supreme motivation of Bodhicitta, and reciting mantras. I taught you the Dharma, about karma, cause and effect, but you didn’t stick with your commitment and you didn’t keep your promise! You couldn’t bear a slight discomfort and so you broke your vows by harming all these innocent beings, spreading so much disease. Because you have broken these commitments and promises, I can’t trust you at all. Now, if you commit to putting a stop to this spread of diseases, then I will see if I can help a little bit. If you do not accept, I will leave right now. Jaded woman, you were bound by your promise; this breaking of your commitment is a great negativity.”

His words shocked her terribly and made her very afraid. Sliding out of the bed and bending down to the floor, she grabbed the feet of Milarepa in deep respect and pleaded desperately,

“We are ignorant beings. Though we have this slight sickness of delusion, please do not say this! Generally, if the virtuous higher worldly spirits are not harmed, then usually we won’t do any harm. We haven’t purposely disregarded your command; we haven’t intentionally done any harm to beings ourselves, and we haven’t sent anyone else to do harm. You see, just as the river here overflowed in summer and naturally made everything wet in the area, in the same way, when I became ill, the demons of our clan along with their assistants, as well as the many hundreds of types of demons, ghosts and beings that enjoy flesh and blood, created harm in the area. However, if I become well, I will obey your words and clear away the sickness of those people. Please, I beg you, look upon me with compassion!”

Milarepa did feel compassion for her, and that evening, he performed a ritual to purify her and extend her life. From the next morning onward, Tashi Tseringma was able to rise from her bed and prostrate to him, bowing down with her whole body on the floor. Then, for seven days, by focusing and directing his awareness, he sent blessings to her and she became well. Her complexion became even more beautiful and radiant than before.

Then Milarepa went to her and told her, “Beautiful one, now you have completely recovered. Therefore, I will go now to help the beings in the town. Tell me, what substances are the most agreeable for you, and what kind of practices should be done to heal the people?”

She replied, “Jetsun, because of the strong interdependent connection between me and the villagers, when I am well, the people also will become well. However, if you want them to recover quickly, understand that it’s the usual situation for all of us worldly dakinis that if one of us is not well, then we make everyone unwell and create disturbance; and further, all the spirits and ghosts are stirred up from the depths in support of creating disturbance.”

She gave him instructions on the mantras, rituals, and offerings to cure the villagers’ illnesses. Then Milarepa went to the people in the nearby village and told them that the great dakini lady was disturbed by their bonfire smoke, and this upset the spirits and ghosts, which caused the people in the villages to have diseases. They did the rituals as Milarepa instructed, and the diseases disappeared after a short time.

Later, the five worldly dakinis, their attendants and many local spirits went to visit Milarepa, and offered him gifts of excellent food and drinks. The five dakini sisters prostrated, bowing on the ground, and sang a song of their great gratitude for his kindness in saving them from the illness that nearly killed them. Along with their leader Tashi Tseringma the other four had become very sick, but were better now that she was better. They wished to repay his kindness by promising never to fail to do what he asks them to do, and promising always to be with him.

Milarepa wondered whether they would really practice like they said they would, or whether they might become lazy or distracted and forget. He thought, “If I teach these yaksha spirits who have showed such gratitude some more instructions of Secret Mantra, will they be able to meditate on them?”

He said to them, “Beautiful Ones, if you have an instruction that can leave you free of ignorance and suffering - free from having to live in samsara, this worldly existence - will you be able to practice it?”

He explained that the terrible illness and unbearable suffering was due to their previous bad karma, and that if they don't turn away from that negative behavior, then they will have to face the most fearsome, hellish results of that karma. He explained that to repay the kindness of his guru, Marpa, he intensely practices meditation, which gives him confidence. He said to them,

“Child, if you would like to have happiness, listen and follow what I say. Follow my example and practice like me. . . .Get rid of all laziness and procrastination, and be diligent. Don't be distracted for even an instant. Then you will quickly accomplish something meaningful, you fortunate ladies.”

The five dakinis assured him that it is appropriate for them to receive the teachings, especially since they had such fear and terror from the sickness, and they knew they would not be able to bear even an instant of punishment in the hell-worlds if they continued behaving as they had before. They wanted to be protected from that horror by purifying their minds.

So, they made great offerings to Milarepa, who then blessed them and gave them instructions including what to do when they die - how to travel from the bardo (the place we go between lives) to the totally blissful pure-lands.

Afterward, the beautiful dakinis said, “You have explained the Dharma of the bardo thoroughly and in great detail. Please give us a short teaching on what it means, that is easy to practice.”

Milarepa granted their wish, explaining more simply what they must practice.

Tashi Tseringma felt tremendous devotion to Milarepa. She put her head to Milarepa's feet and said, “From this time on, in all my future lives, I will follow you. Until I have perfected these practices you taught us, please think of me.”

The five dakinis bowed and walked around him with devotion and then returned to their celestial world.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the five dakinis want Milarepa to teach them when they came to visit with all the ghosts, demons and spirits? (the Dharma)
2. When he taught the special instructions and gave them mantras and empowerments, what were they supposed to do with them – what did he make them commit or promise to do with the mantras? (to practice them)

3. What did he tell them they should never do again to others? (never to insult, abuse, or harm anyone)
4. How did all the villagers get sick? (When Tashi Tseringma is sick, then the demons and ghosts cause others to get sick. She said it was because of her own breath, so maybe the illness in her breath caused the ghosts and demons to make the people sick)
5. Could she have prevented the people from getting sick? (yes)
6. What were the bad qualities that Milarepa told the dakinis to get rid of? (laziness, procrastination, being distracted).

DHARMA DISCUSSION – Forgetting Commitments and Laziness:

“Child, if you would like to have happiness, listen and follow what I say. Follow my example and practice like me. . . . Get rid of all laziness and procrastination and be diligent.” p. 359-360.

“Listen now, my sister Peta. Since you were young, you’ve had no perseverance in dharma. To think you’ll practice when you’re old, what good will that do?” p. 643.

“I do not have any laziness; I’ve followed after the guru’s command.” p. 366.

“Lazy ones don’t accomplish what is good for oneself or others. Have diligence in practicing virtuous actions.” p. 98.

“This enemy that deceives you, called laziness, though you think it’s good, will only bring harm. Do you know that laziness is an enemy? If you do, then you should leave it behind!” p. 143.

*“To delight in temporary pleasure is a great hindrance.
If you think you have leisure to put off the dharma, that is foolish.
If you fear your death, apply yourself in meditation.”* p. 589.

“To have enthusiasm and delight in virtue is diligence free from laziness.” p. 379.

Milarepa knew that the five dakinis were not practicing what he taught them - they were lazy about doing the spiritual work he had asked them to do.

And then when they became ill, they forgot their promise not to harm anyone - they let their demon friends spread the illness to everyone and didn’t do anything to prevent that from happening.

Being lazy and forgetting to do what we said we would do – these are problems that almost everyone has.

Who has never been lazy? Who has never forgotten to do something we were supposed to do?

Sometimes we just feel lazy. Can you think of some reasons why you sometimes feel lazy?

Maybe you worked hard on something and then you feel tired afterward.

Or you didn't get enough sleep.

Or you have been sitting around at home and don't feel like getting up to do something else.

Or you have no motivation – you don't want to do what you are supposed to do.

Can you think of reasons why you sometimes forget to do something important?

Often it is because you were distracted with something else.

Or you didn't really want to do it, so you didn't want to think about it.

Or it wasn't important to you, although it was important to someone else, for example your parents.



Occasionally being lazy or forgetting to do something isn't usually a problem.

But it can become a terrible problem if it becomes a habit.

We can't keep a job or properly take care of our family if we grow up to be lazy or forgetful.

Is there anything important that we can achieve if we are lazy or forgetful? Not really!

Laziness is the enemy of success.

Discipline is the foundation of success.

Having a habit of laying around, playing videogames, watching TV, or being on social media for

long periods of time makes our mind foggy, unclear, forgetful, moody and irritable.

It can even lead to depression, weight gain, sleep problems, back problems, anxiety, and worse grades in school.

So, we need to watch out that we don't develop a habit of laziness or forgetfulness.

What do we need to overcome laziness? We need to have some discipline!

Do you think you can just wait until you are older to become disciplined?

No, we develop our habits when we are young! And our habits are difficult to break.

What can we do to avoid a habit of laziness?

First, we should be aware of when we are being lazy. That means being honest with ourselves, noticing, “I am being lazy now.” And then think about how long you will allow yourself to be lazy. Maybe you can give yourself some kind of a limit, such as until dinnertime.

Do you have any rules at home that help you be disciplined, for example a screen time limit, or a limit on what TV shows you can watch? Or do you have a strict schedule for your sports, music, homework and other activities? Or do you have a rule to finish your homework before watching TV?

Can you think of any other rules or habits to help you become more disciplined, to get rid of any lazy habits?

For example, you can develop a habit of doing prayers or meditation before going to bed, or in the morning when you wake up.

Or you can take a moment of mindfulness just before we eat, or before you do homework.

You can chant a mantra aloud or silently, for example the Mani mantra – Om Mani Padme Hung – at certain times. When is a convenient time for you to chant this mantra?

Great teachers emphasize the importance of chanting this mantra very often, while wishing that all beings be happy and peaceful, so we can develop our compassion and a peaceful mind. If we have a habit of chanting a mantra or meditation, we develop more resilience, so we can calm down and think more clearly when events happen that make us upset, angry, frustrated, afraid, or stressed.

ACTIVITY – Weave a flying carpet:



Cut cardboard (for example an old folder) into rectangles approximately 6 or 7 inches long by 4 inches wide, and cut notches on the short sides to make a loom. Wind a long piece of yarn along the cardboard over one face of the cardboard, threading this “warp” thread through the notches, as you see the front (on right) and back (on left) of the looms in the photo. Then weave another very long piece of yarn (the “woof”) through the “warp” threads. When this piece has been woven, tie another long piece of yarn to it and continue

weaving. Continue with other pieces of yarn until the warp threads are almost full. Then cut the warp threads and tie pairs of them together to finish both ends of the little carpet.