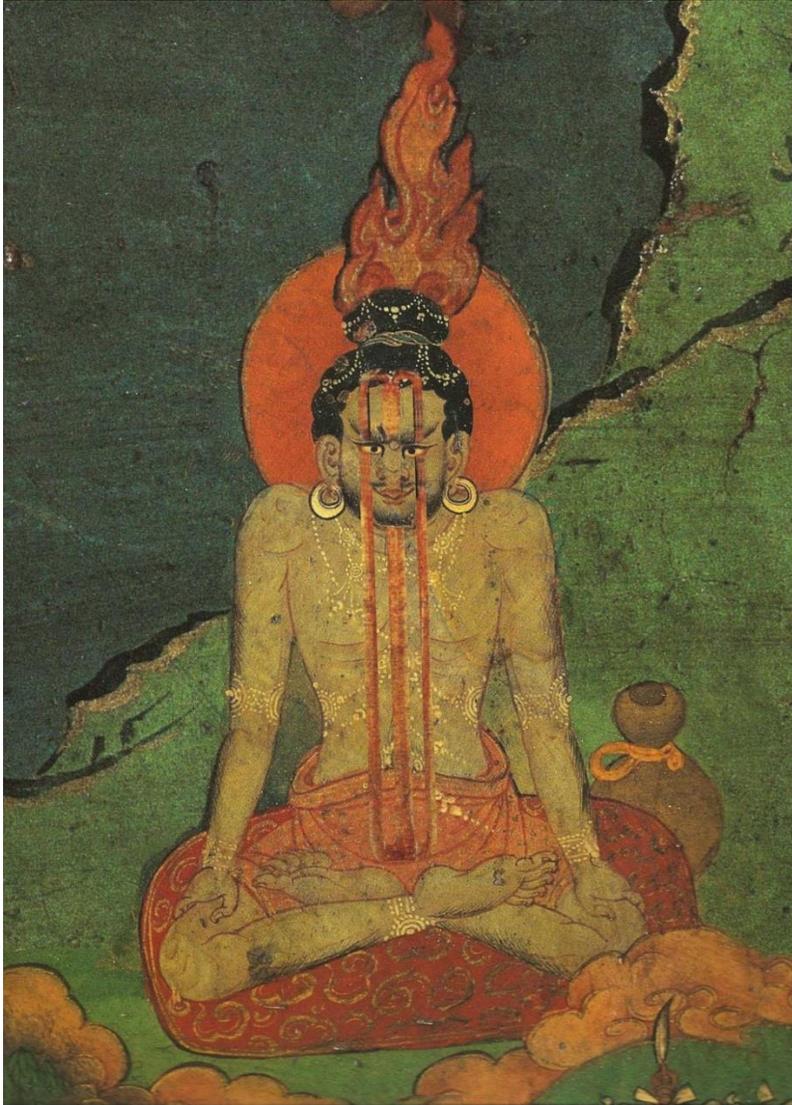


THE LIFE OF TILOPA, PART 2 – Karma

Tilopa, or King Nada Tilo as he was called in his kingdom, not only received teachings from the Wisdom Dakinis and the great teacher Nagarjuna, he also received teachings from others. From other famous teachers he learned Phowa, how to leave your body when you are dying, through the top of the head. He also learned about Bardo, where one goes immediately after dying. He received instructions on the Clear Light, when the mind can see itself in deep meditation.



And he learned Tummo, how to warm your body when it is very cold outside, which is very important for yogis who meditate high up in the mountains where it is very windy and freezing cold.

(This is an illustration of how a yogi practices Tummo, visualizing the channels of energy in his body).

Tilopa decided not to remain as a king. Instead, he wanted to spend all of his time practicing and teaching others what he had learned. So he walked long distances to other kingdoms.



In one kingdom, there was a very powerful magician who hated the King of that kingdom.

The magician wanted to take over the King's palace, so with his magic he created an illusion of an army approaching the palace.

Some people near the palace saw the army approaching and warned the King. The King was very wise and realized that he was being attacked by sorcery.



He also was very alarmed, knowing how powerful and destructive sorcerers could be. He immediately called for his advisors to discuss what to do.

Just then, an old woman appeared among the advisors.

"Why are you gathered here?" she asked loudly.

"We are trying to think of ways to end this war," one of the King's advisors replied.

She said firmly, "I know what to do; let us go to the King."

The advisors didn't question her. She seemed to know something they didn't know.

They immediately brought her to the King.

She bowed to the King respectfully, and looked at him with her piercing eyes, and said,

“You should seek help from Tilopa!”

The King didn't know who Tilopa was but this old woman seemed wise, like she really knew what to do. So the King ordered his men to go out and find Tilopa in a certain place in the forest according to the old woman's instructions, and to ask his help to protect them from the sorcerer.



When the King's men found Tilopa in the forest, they anxiously told him about the sorcerer's army approaching the King's palace.

Tilopa went into a deep meditation and, by his own powers, he created many armies of magical beings.

They fought against the sorcerer's illusionary army and destroyed the whole army.

Then they went after the sorcerer. They bound him up so his powers were useless.

The magician was totally shocked. How could this happen? Who could have greater powers than he had?

Tilopa's magical beings brought the sorcerer to Tilopa.

When the magician saw Tilopa, he knew that this man was no sorcerer. He was a yogi, one who purifies his mind and seeks enlightenment. He was a yogi who practiced the Dharma, the teachings of the Buddha. The yogi's powers did not arise from selfish desires and secret techniques, like a sorcerer. Instead, they come from intense meditation, deep wisdom and a pure mind.

The magician wondered, why would a great yogi with a pure mind do something so destructive – to kill off his whole army?

So he said, “Precious one, you rely on the Dharma teachings. So, how can you be so destructive?”

Tilopa replied, “Killing magical beings is not wrong, because they have no mind.”

The magician agreed that the magical beings he had created were only illusions, so they felt no pain or suffering, and therefore killing them would not create bad karma.

And the magician began to feel devotion to this powerful and wise yogi. Surely, he thought, it is better to follow the Dharma rather than to continue living as just a sorcerer, filled with anger and selfishness. So he requested Tilopa to be his teacher, to instruct him in Dharma and meditation. From that day he decided to be a yogi and student of Tilopa.

Tilopa taught other people too, who were not interested in coming to learn from a yogi. He saw people doing things that would lead to great suffering in their future, and he wanted to help them.

He saw a butcher, who made his living by killing many animals. The butcher loved his son dearly, and wanted to give his son the best meat every day to eat. Tilopa saw an opportunity to teach this man. So he hid the man’s son, and created an illusion in the man’s cooking pot while he was cooking outside.



Where there had been hunks of meat bubbling in the pot, Tilopa made a gruesome illusion – he made it look like there were parts of his son’s body cooking in the pot.

The butcher took the lid off the pot and gasped in shock when he saw what looked like his son’s arm in the pot.

He began to cry out in anguish.

Tilopa walked up to him, and said, “If you stop taking the life of other beings, I will give your son back to you.”

The butcher agreed never to take the life of any living being, and never to do any wrong actions. He understood that he had caused fear, pain and suffering to the animals. He thought about how hurting another innocent living being was like hurting his own dear son.

Tilopa brought his son back to him, and the butcher wept in relief.

Tilopa taught the man about karma, saying, “The result of one’s negative actions will return to oneself.”

The butcher felt devotion to this guru who had led him away from ignorance and who showed him how to be compassionate and to think about karma, that sooner or later you experience the results of your good and bad actions. The man, who now was no longer a butcher, became Tilopa’s student.

There were other butchers and hunters who killed animals for food, and Tilopa had to think of a way to get their attention so they would stop making the animals suffer and stop creating bad karma for themselves.



So he became a hunter himself, and chased all the animals away so the hunters and butchers couldn’t find any more animals to kill. So they had no meat to sell, and had to find other types of food to eat and other ways to support their families, that didn’t involve harming other living beings.

There were other types of people who Tilopa wanted to help. There was a man who traveled around preaching that karma doesn’t exist. One day he had a debate with a Buddhist scholar who explained to him that karma does exist. People sat around the two men and heard their arguments, but no one was qualified to judge which man was the winner of the debate.

Tilopa, arrived on the scene, and the people sitting around the two men saw that he looked like a wise yogi and asked him to judge the debate. Tilopa listened, and then said, “He who acknowledges cause and effect is the winner.”

The man who didn't believe in karma then announced to Tilopa, "Okay, I wish to debate with you!"

Tilopa explained karma, the law of cause and effect, very clearly, but the man was stubborn, and said, "Since I don't see cause and effect directly, I don't accept what you say. If it is true, then show me directly. Only then will I accept the Buddha's teachings."

Tilopa snapped his fingers, and showed him a hell world, with burning fires.



There was a pot filled with melted metal, which was one of the tortures in the hell world for beings to be dunked into. It is extremely painful to touch molten metal! The man saw there were no people burning in the pot, and asked, "Why are there no beings in the pot?"

The guardian of the hell world said, "There is a man who does not believe in the law of cause and effect, who is creating negative karma by teaching wrong views. After his death, we will cook him in this pot!"

The man turned to Tilopa, and stubbornly said, "Well, it might be true that a person can be born in hell from negative karma. But you don't have to do good actions to get good results."

Tilopa said, "Come, I will show you." He showed the man the Heaven of the 33 Gods. It was the most beautiful and peaceful place, with everyone living in a divine palace! All around there was nothing but colorful gardens full of flowers, butterflies and birds. In each god's palace a god was standing with a goddess, both of them blissfully happy and smiling, except in one palace a goddess was standing alone. The man asked, "Why is she standing alone?"



The goddess answered him, "On the earth there is a man who is just now changing his view, understanding cause and effect, the law of karma, and who is giving up doing non-virtuous actions and now doing virtuous actions. After his death he will be reborn here."

The man was convinced now of the truth of karma.

Tilopa said to him, “Beings who are motivated by their negative karmas suffer in hell worlds, but virtuous beings, motivated by their good karmas, enjoy the heaven worlds after their death. Tilopa then gave him more Dharma teachings and the man became a devoted student of Tilopa.

QUESTIONS:

1. How did Tilopa overpower the magician? (created armies of magical beings who destroyed the magician’s army and brought the magician to Tilopa)
2. What did the magician admire about Tilopa after he saw how powerful he was? (he was a yogi, and was wise, practiced Dharma, and had a pure mind)
3. How did Tilopa teach the butcher not to kill animals? (showed an illusion of his son’s body in the cooking pot)
4. How did Tilopa teach the hunters and other butchers not to harm animals? (he became a hunter and chased the animals away)
5. How did Tilopa teach a man who didn’t believe in karma? (showed him a hell world and a heaven world, where he will go depending on his karma)

DHARMA DISCUSSION – KARMA

“The result of one’s negative actions will return to oneself.” (Tilopa, GKM p. 50)

We have all had many, many past lives.

Some as a human, on the Earth.

What other types of beings or worlds can people be reborn in?

People can reborn in lower worlds as animals, hungry ghosts, or in a hell-world

People can also be reborn in a heaven-world.

Which of those worlds we are reborn in depends on our karma.

What is karma? It is our actions, and our speech - what we say and do.

When we do helpful, good actions or say kind words, then that makes good things happen to us -- things that make us happy and comfortable, at some time in our future.

When we do bad things and say hurtful words, then that makes bad things happen to us – unpleasant or painful things, at some time in our future.

So we get exactly what we deserve, good and bad, from the karmas from this life and our many, many past lives.

We all have a mix of good and bad karmas from past lives that makes both good and bad things happen to us in this life.

So when bad things happen to us, it's not someone else's fault, even if it seems like someone else might have caused it.

It's from our own negative karmas we did in the past. So we shouldn't blame others.

We are really responsible for everything that happens to us.

Other people just help to make the things happen, good or bad, that we deserve from our karmas.

What about people who seem always to be lucky? Sometimes we might feel jealous of them. But they're just receiving the results of their good karmas.

And, we never know what may happen in their future. Sometimes people who are very lucky when they are young become very unlucky when they are older. So we shouldn't be jealous.

What about people who are unlucky – such as those who are very ill, poor, unattractive, or have terrible experiences – are they bad people, with so much bad karma?

No, they have a mix of good and bad karmas like everyone.

They may become very fortunate later on from their good karmas.

Everyone has some very unpleasant events in their lives – even Shakyamuni Buddha got badly injured on his foot because of some bad action he did in a past life.

So are you making a good future for yourself, by your good words and actions?

This is a question we should ask ourselves often.

We can't just relax and think our karma is great because we don't kill, steal or do other terrible things.

It's important to increase our love and compassion for others.

Because that is what gets rid of our thoughts that are selfish and unkind, and prevents us from saying and doing things that are unkind.

If we don't try to be more compassionate, then selfish thoughts creep into our minds.

How do we be more compassionate? With our kind words, and noticing what we can do to be helpful to others, wherever we are.

There are so many ways that we might not have noticed - every day, all around us – that we can do to be helpful to someone.

What if we are in a bad mood and we don't feel like helping or being compassionate?

Try to understand that it is just temporary, and find a healthy way to let the bad mood go away. For example, talk to someone who might understand how you feel, or read, outside, or take a nap.

Think about others having much more serious problems than you have, and wish that they feel better.

You can decide to be in a better mood, and choose to be kind rather than annoying to others.

We can't just wait until the future to improve our compassion.

We are very lucky to be born as a human, because you can choose to do good karmas and make a good future for yourself.

Animals, hungry ghosts, and other beings - and even people who are very sick or live in terrible conditions - they don't have much opportunity to do good deeds, so they can't improve their situation.

So now that you are a human, and you are healthy and have everything you need, it's very important to do good things now in this life!

ACTIVITY:

Practice Tilopa's famous six instructions as a way to observe the mind and practice mindfulness:

Don't recall
Don't imagine
Don't think
Don't examine
Don't control
Rest.

A more detailed explanation of the 6 instructions is:

Let go of what has past – don't think of what has already happened
Let go of what may come – don't think of the future
Let go of what is happening now – don't think about what is going on around you
Don't try to figure anything out
Don't try to make anything happen
Relax right now and let the mind rest.

This can be practiced while sitting in meditation position, or while walking.