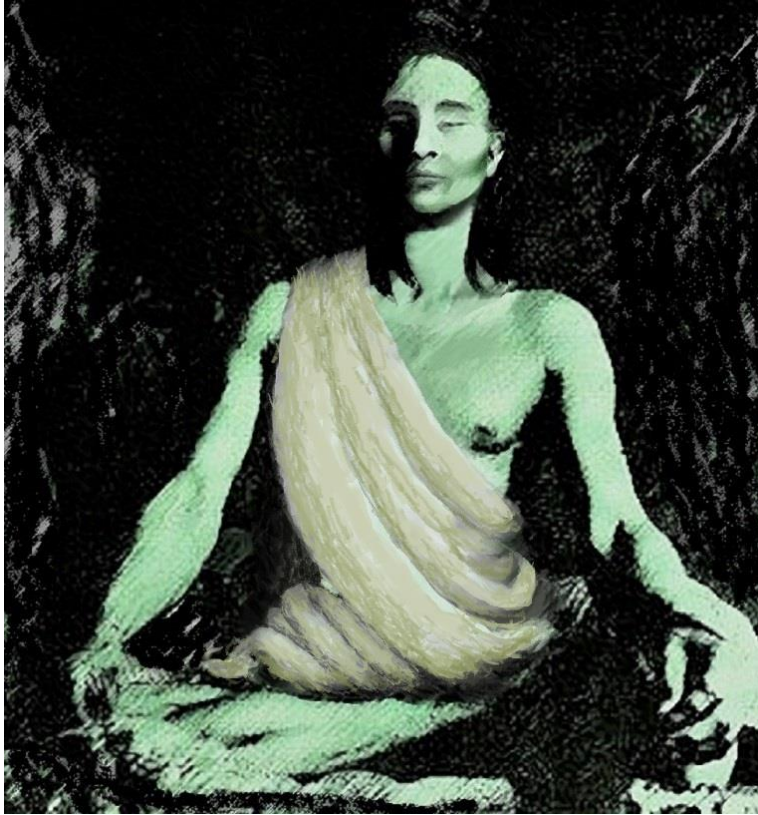


THE LIFE OF MILAREPA Part 24 – Enemies

One day, Milarepa was meditating at Nyishang Mountain, on the border of Tibet and Nepal, and some hunters from the town of Nyishang saw him. He was sitting absolutely still, in lotus position, with his eyes partially open.



With his thin body, greenish skin, and just a simple white cloth over him, he looked like a dead body or a ghost. Seeing this strange sight, the hunters suddenly got scared and ran away.

But they were curious, so they went back and approached him again, with arrows in their bows aimed at Milarepa. They asked,

“Are you a human or a ghost? If you are a human, then you must be making fun of us.”

But Milarepa remained silent, completely still, keeping his eyes partially closed and gazing straight ahead without blinking.

The hunters, thinking he was either a dead body or some kind of demon, shot poisoned arrows at him. But amazingly, all of the arrows missed his body! So, the hunters tried to throw him off the rock he was sitting on. But they were unable to move his body; it seemed too heavy. Then they set a fire all around him, trying to burn him. But somehow, his body didn't get burned! Finally, they managed to throw him over a cliff, down to the river below. But Milarepa's body remained in perfect lotus position, and without touching the water, he hovered above it, and then rose all the way back up to where he had been sitting before. He remained totally silent.

The hunters were totally shocked and amazed! They couldn't wait to tell their friends in the village about this unbelievable man with supernatural powers.

At that time in the village, there was a student of Milarepa named Khyira Repa, who had been hunting with his dog and trying to kill a deer when he first met Milarepa. Khyira Repa overheard the hunters telling everyone about the miraculous man on the mountain, and said,

“Among men, this yogi of Tibet is truly excellent - he is my guru! All that he does shows that he is a genuinely powerful yogi, a *siddha*. He can even make animals meditate!”

Then he told the story of how Milarepa made his deer and dog meditate and how he became a dharma practitioner. Hearing his story, everyone had great faith and respect for Milarepa. And soon, the word spread all over Nepal about the powerful yogi Milarepa.



Sometime later, Rechungpa and Shengom Repa, two students of Milarepa, were traveling toward Nepal to find Milarepa and invite him to come back to Tibet. They were walking along the road when suddenly, bandits rushed up from the roadside to attack and rob them! Rechungpa and Shengom Repa cried out,

“We’re yogis! Please don’t attack us!”

The bandits replied, “Only the Great Yogi Milarepa can be considered a true yogi. Poisonous arrows won’t strike him, fire can’t burn him, and water can’t carry him

away. If you throw him off a cliff, he flies back up!”

The two yogis asked the bandits to show where Milarepa was, offering a gift to persuade them to show the way. So the bandits directed them to where Milarepa was staying.

When they arrived, Rechungpa and Shengom Repa asked Milarepa about his health, as was usual in those days: “Have you been well?”

Milarepa answered that he was well, and sang a song as a teaching, with these words:

“Did those bandits try to attack you?
If so, you should think about your past karma.
When you have no wealth, you are free of enemies:
Give up collecting and keeping things, my sons!
If you control your mind, you’ll be free of enemies:
Give up your anger and aggression my sons!
If you recognize your own minds, you’ll be free of enemies:
Look at the face of the deity, my sons!
If you develop compassion, you’ll be free of enemies:
Meditate on lovingkindness, my sons!”

Shengom Repa said, "It's because a yogi like you has this way of being happy and free of enemies that we have come to invite you to return. You don't need to stay only in mountain retreats so far away from people. Please, come back to Tibet and help the beings there."

Milarepa replied, "Staying in mountain retreats is the best way to benefit beings. I can return to Tibet, but my remaining strictly alone like this is not bad, because it repays the kindness of my guru's command. I will repay his kindness with practicing what he told me to do. This is the tradition that this lineage of gurus practiced."

Shengom Repa and Rechungpa insisted he come to Tibet to help other beings there. Because of their sincere requests, he went to a cave at Lapchi, on the border of Tibet and Nepal.

One night at midnight, as Milarepa was meditating on the bank of a river, 18 monstrous demons came near him, trying to disturb his meditation, and making storms, earthquakes, and magical illusions to shock him.



Among these demons were five terrifying female demons who had hideous faces and bodies. One of them looked like a smiling skeleton, one looked like a jackal dripping with blood, one looked like the spirit of death, one was smeared with ashes and roaring with loud laughter, and the other looked partly like a monster and partly like a ravishingly beautiful goddess, trying to get Milarepa's attention.

He saw many frightening ghosts and other evil spirits. He saw arms without bodies shaking and moving plants, rocks and mountains, and he saw the sky filled with fire. He heard terrible roaring voices, shouting "You can't stay here, go away! We'll tear your mind away from your body!" They sent diseases and illnesses into his body that made him feel terribly sick and weak.

So he thought of his guru Marpa and the yidam deities, dakinis and dharma protectors, and called them to help him and fight against the powerful demons. He called out to them to “Throw these evil demons down the river!”

The demons thought he must be worried and scared, because he called for help. They thought, “With the way this yogi has spoken, maybe he is worried. Some ideas have arisen in his mind, so it seems he is worried, he has some fear, and therefore we will have a chance to fight with him! We are somewhat pleased by this, but still we don’t know the extent of Milarepa’s meditative experience or inner confidence in his spiritual development. So, we will try to intimidate him with more frightful and terrorizing words. We must find out whether he really has fearless confidence in the dharma!”

Then they said to Milarepa, with horrifying voices:

“With magical bodies we’ve come to this place; we have minds that insult others and wish to harm them

You have fallen into this and there’s no way out!

Since you don’t have any control, your life force will be taken away.

We’ll snuff out your breath. Your mind will be taken away.

We’ll eat your body, all its flesh and blood. Your life and good fortune will come to an end.

You’ll be taken away by the Lord of Death. Your negative karma has taken its hold! . . .

All of the actions you’ve done before, do you have regret for them now, or not? . . .

Are you prepared to die happily, or not?

Do you have confidence without fear of rebirth in the three lower worlds of animals, hungry ghosts and hell-worlds?

These are our questions for you, yogi. . . .

Oh you poor yogi, you have no relatives or friends.

In this place that’s so horrifying, you must go alone without any companion.

Don’t stay! Don’t stay! You must quickly go!”

Milarepa thought, “All you ghosts, and all things that exist, are just projections of the mind.

They are all just in my mind. This is taught in the Buddhist teachings.

This was pointed out to me through my noble guru’s instructions.

The true mind, the Buddha Nature, can’t be killed or cut or transformed into something bad even if an army of millions and billions should surround it and attack with weapons!”

He rested his mind in meditation, and then he sang a song with these words:

“An unbelievable number of spirits have come . . .

In particular are the five fearful rakshasa demonesses,

You shouted horrible things to me. . . .

But I trained my mind in the inner awareness . . .

I have no fear of birth or death.

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.
I have no fear of the three lower worlds. . . .
Even if all the 18 hell-worlds arise as my enemies,
If I think, 'How frightful!' then it's I who suffers. . . .
Because I understand the true nature of confusion, ghosts, I have no fear of you.
Everything comes from the mind.
All things of samsara (in the world) don't really exist, but they just appear (in our minds):
how wonderfully amazing!"

With this deep wisdom and understanding, Milarepa announced to the demons:



"Since eons ago in the distant past, all the way up until now, we've had an unimaginable number of births and different bodies. During all this time we've only collected the causes of suffering, and done things that are meaningless. This body that I have now, made of the four elements of earth, water, fire and air, with the 32 impure body parts - muscles, bones, bone marrow, fat, brain, oils, blood, hair, nails, skin, and so on - if you spirits and ghosts want it, why shouldn't I give it to you? I give up my body as an offering to you, so that all beings can be rid of their negative karmas.

"From the top of my head to the soles of my feet, all my different body parts,
Anything that each of you wants, take them right now and be happy and content!
May you have only delight.
Also, because of this offering of my body, from this day forward may the bad intentions of harming and aggression of this group of spirits be calmed and made peaceful.
May your minds be completely filled with only pure great compassion.
With that compassion as the cause and condition, from now on, may you do no harm or injury to sentient beings.
By turning away from harming and injuring others, may your minds have great love.
With many intentions of loving-kindness and joy, may you all have the wealth of much happiness."

By offering of his body to them and wishing that their hearts be filled with love and compassion, all the demons, spirits and ghosts changed completely – they became inspired, and they were filled with devotion, love and admiration for him! They stopped their magic and terrible actions, and they began to feel a deep peace. From among them, the five extremely savage female demons said:

“Yogi, it is truly amazing that you would offer your body without any attachment to it and without any worry about losing your body. However, we sincerely did not wish to harm or injure you. We only came to examine what kind of meditation experience and confidence in wisdom you have. Generally, all illusions of horrible demons are caused by the mind and its ideas. Upon your arrival, we thought you had a bit of fear or nervousness, because you called an army of deities and dakinis. Seeing that you had doubts and fear, we said many unpleasant things and harmed you. But now that you have spoken such words of truth, we who have come here have great regret and shame.”



They said further, “Now, yogi, stop the movements of your mind that are so hazardous, and let your mind rest in the deepest meditation. If you do that, when you encounter any other obstacles, even if the entire world should quake, they will not be able to intimidate or disturb you.”

Milarepa said, “In my yogic tradition, we don’t see obstacles [or difficulties] as bad. Whatever magical or frightening things arise, I take them as something good. Obstacles [and difficulties] are like cracking the whip of discipline and diligence for beginning dharma practitioners who are lazy. It makes them immediately practice and intensify their awareness. By doing this, they are motivated to do spiritual practice, and then they can meditate and concentrate well.

“And for those who are more experienced with practicing dharma and meditation, obstacles increase their mindfulness and wisdom, and deepen their meditation. Because of that, the special Bodhicitta arises and their practice improves more and more.

“At that point, the demons and spirits are transformed into dharma protectors. When you see the dharma protectors as beings who come from Buddha, then when you face difficult

situations, you will have special powers. Your weaknesses become transformed into good qualities.”

The demons said,

“You’re a yogi who has attained real stability in your practice. We didn’t realize that. We feel very sorry and we regret causing you harm and problems. So we ask you to forgive us. From now on we will be your subjects and listen to whatever you command. We will do whatever activity you command us to do.”

Milarepa accepted this, and then all the demons, ghosts and spirits bowed down to him together, so it looked like a large wall falling down. Then they went away.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the hunters try to kill Milarepa? (they thought he was a ghost or demon)
2. What did Rechungpa and Shengom Repa say to the bandits when they tried to attack and rob them? (they said we are yogis, please don’t attack us)
3. When Milarepa first saw the demons, who did he want to come and help him? (his guru, the deities and dharma protectors)
4. What did he want them to do to the demons? (fight against them and throw them down the river)
5. How did the demons think Milarepa was feeling when he called out for help? (worried and afraid)
6. What did the demons do then, when they thought he was scared? (tried to scare him even more)
7. What did Milarepa wish for the demons to have in their hearts? (love and compassion)

DHARMA DISCUSSION – Enemies

“A good friend may turn into your enemy.”

*“Abandoning negative actions, I feel good.
With my efforts in merit, I feel good.
With no anger or ill will, I feel good.”*

“Toward all sentient beings..., continuous compassion and love are important.”

*“If you do not have ill will toward others, your own merit will flourish....
If your conduct is in accord with Dharma, the dharmapalas and dakinis will protect you.”*

“Enemies are fleeting just like a flower; to risk your life fighting them is extremely foolish.”

*“Did those bandits try to attack you?
If so, you should think about your past karma . . .
If you control your mind, you’ll be free of enemies:
Give up your anger and aggression . . .
If you develop compassion, you’ll be free of enemies:
Meditate on lovingkindness for others, my sons!”*

*“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.”*

“I look at this life like a dream or illusion, and cultivate compassion for those who don’t realize this.”

- Milarepa (pp. 39, 66, 108, 295, 555, 644)

When the hunters first saw Milarepa looking like a ghost, they were scared and ran away. When Shengom Repa and Rechungpa saw the robbers, the young yogis probably were scared. When the demons tried to shock and threaten Milarepa and put diseases in his body, it was extremely frightening, probably one of the most frightening experiences a person can have! They all were facing terrifying enemies: ghosts, robbers and demons.

Do you have any enemies?

Is there someone with whom you are very angry, or whom you hate?

Is there anyone who has seriously upset you, who has done something terrible, who bullies you or who is abusive? Is there someone who you never want to be near?

Do you have a rival, someone you don’t like who is in competition with you?

Did you have a friend who disappointed you terribly and is no longer your friend?

A friend later may become an enemy.

Having an enemy is a burden in your mind.

When you have negative emotions – fear, anger, hatred, jealousy, or revenge – they are stressful, annoying, a burden, like carrying around a heavy weight everywhere.

So it’s better to avoid having enemies in the first place.

Is there something we can do to avoid making enemies?

We can try to reduce the chance that others get angry at us – we can try not to be annoying.

What are some examples of what not to do, so you are not annoying?

Don't make fun of or pick on others, don't brag or show off too much, don't be too bossy, don't talk bad about others or spread rumors, don't "tattle" too much.

Also, we can avoid making enemies by being kind toward everyone, and by having patience and tolerance, being understanding of others.

But we can't totally avoid enemies.

Some people are jealous, and some like to make trouble. And some people are abusive.

If someone older than you – even a family member or teacher – has done something that you think might be abuse, be sure to tell a trusted adult immediately.

This is a situation you likely can't handle alone, and you need help and support.

Even Milarepa called for help and support from a trusted person – his guru – when the situation (with the demons) seemed too much to handle.

How do we deal with enemies? Here are some ideas:

Try to avoid them. Arguing or confronting them provokes them want to fight back more. Is it worth the risk? Think carefully about what you reasonably expect to gain if you confront them. In the story, when Milarepa called his guru, deities and dharma protectors to fight against the demons, they tried to scare him even more. He found that a kinder approach was better.

If there is a misunderstanding, try to clear it up by communicating in a way the other person is likely to listen. Choose a time when you both are not upset. You might try writing rather than speaking to the other person. Admit your own misunderstanding or mistake.

Explore and change your feelings toward the enemy.

Do you feel worried that your enemy may do something else to harm you?

Are you upset because of something your enemy already did?

If you are worried the enemy may harm you in the future, remember karma – you only get what you deserve according to your karma. You won't be harmed by your enemy unless it is the result of your own past negative karma, and you would have to suffer the results of that karma anyway whether from this enemy or from someone else.

If you are still upset by something your enemy did, remember karma - it was the result of your own past karma, so don't think of it as unfair. Now you have received the result of that bad karma, so it's done and gone. But the enemy has now created their own bad karma, and they will have to suffer the results of it.

So instead of having feelings of anger and revenge, try to feel some compassion for them, remembering that they're unfortunate because they haven't learned dharma, or aren't practicing it, or are hurting inside in some way that made them want to hurt you. You can wish for your enemy to be peaceful and happy, so he wouldn't hurt you or others.

When you try to have lovingkindness and compassion for all beings, including enemies, then your anger and hatred fades away, and you feel less irritated by enemies. Also, your merit increases and you stop creating more enemies and negative karmas, causes of harm.

Also, remember impermanence. Everything is always changing. Enemies appear and disappear for everyone, even for Milarepa.

Learning to deal with our enemies when we are young helps us deal with them when we are older. We learn and develop our patience, compassion, and confidence. If we didn't have enemies to test us, to give us challenges, we wouldn't learn certain skills.

ACTIVITIES:

With colored pencils, color the drawing of Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, on the next page.

Chant "Om Mani Padme Hum" and wishing that all beings, including our enemies, be happy and peaceful.

