

THE LIFE OF MILAREPA Part 2 – Revenge

After hearing the cruel words from the uncle and aunt, telling her to leave her own house that her husband had built, White Jewel cried and cried, and her brother, and Zessay's family, tried to console her. Her brother said, "Send your son to learn a skill. Then you and your daughter can live with me and work in my fields. It's always good to occupy yourself with something useful. Anyway, you must do something so you don't look helpless in front of the uncle and aunt."

White Jewel said bitterly, "All of my goods have been stolen away from me. Yet, I have never begged for anything to raise my children. I will not accept from the uncle and aunt a single piece of my own property! Now, because they have destroyed us, I will just take offerings of food when people give to the poor. That will put them to shame. After that, then I myself will work in my field."

White Jewel thought about her brother's advice to send her son to learn a skill. In a nearby village, there was a master magician, who was quite popular in the region. White Jewel took her son, Milarepa, who was now a young man, to learn how to read from this magician.

And, relatives offered White Jewel and her son and daughter things that they needed, like food, oil and firewood. White Jewel's brother would not allow them to become beggars. So, White Jewel did whatever work was available to earn money to take care of herself and her children. She spun wool into yarn, and wove yarn into fabric. Peta Gonkyi, Milarepa's sister, also worked as much as she could to earn food and clothing. But, they still did not have enough food and clothes. Their clothes were tattered and they suffered from hunger and unhappiness.

One day, Milarepa went with his teacher, the magician, to a wedding feast. His teacher drank a lot of beer there, and soon became very drunk. He had received several gifts for conducting the wedding feast, asked Milarepa to carry home the gifts. Milarepa also had drunk beer and become drunk, and as he was carrying the gifts, he began to sing. The road back to the school went by Milarepa's house, and he was singing as he passed his house. His mother heard him singing outside, and said to herself,

"What is this? That sounds like the voice of my son. But how could he be singing when we are so miserable?"

She couldn't believe what she heard, so she looked outside. And sure enough, Milarepa was outside, singing!



She cried out in surprise, grabbed a stick and a handful of ashes, and ran down the steps and threw the ashes in Milarepa's face! Full of anger, she struck him with the stick several times on his head.

She shouted angrily, "Father Banner of Wisdom, is this your son? He is not worthy of you! Look at what has happened to us, mother and son!" Then she collapsed and fainted.

Milarepa's sister, Peta Gonkyi came running up and said, "Elder brother, what are you doing? What's happened to mother?"

Her weeping brought Milarepa to his senses, and he started crying too. They rubbed their mothers' hands and called out to her, and after a moment she awoke and opened her eyes.

Then their mother looked at Milarepa with tear-filled eyes, and said, "Since we are the most unfortunate people on earth, is it proper to sing? When I think of it, I, your old mother, am filled with despair and can only cry." Then the three of them cried.

Milarepa said, "Mother, you are right. Don't be so distressed. I will do whatever you wish."

In her despair, White Jewel angrily said, "I wished you were dressed in the coat of a man, and riding a horse, so your feet would rip the necks of our enemies. That is not possible. But, you can harm them secretly. I want that you thoroughly learn magic together with the destructive spell, and first destroy your uncle and aunt, then the villagers and neighbors who have treated us so cruelly. I want you to curse them and their descendants down to the ninth generation! Now, see if you can do it."

Milarepa, feeling the deep emotions of his mother, replied, "Mother, I will try. Prepare supplies for my journey and a gift for the lama."

So that her son would learn magic, White Jewel sold half of her field, and with that money she bought a big beautiful chunk of turquoise, a big white horse who was well-loved in the area, bundles of dye for dyeing clothes with color, and packs of sugar.

Milarepa went to stay with a group of people who were going to go on a long journey, so they could all travel safely together. Five young men joined the group, and said that they were going

to the region of Ü to study religion and magic. Milarepa offered to join them since he also wanted to learn magic. They agreed, and Milarepa brought them home to stay as guests for a few days before their journey.

Milarepa's mother secretly told the five young men, "This son of mine has no willpower. So you, his friends, should motivate him to become deeply skilled in magic. Then later I will let you stay here and give you generous rewards."

Afterward, she held Milarepa's hand tightly and took him aside. With tears running down her cheeks and her voice choking with sobs, she said to him, "Above all, remember our misfortune and let the signs of your magic be shown in our village. Then come back. The magic of your friends and ours is not the same. The magic for them is for well-loved children, who want it only for pleasure. The magic for us is for people who have suffered tragedy. That is why an absolutely strong will is needed. If you return without having shown signs of your magic in our village, I, your old mother, will kill myself before your eyes."



Milarepa promised her he would do as she asked. He assured her of his love for her. He got on his horse and left on his journey, looking back at her continuously, and many tears fell from his eyes.

His mother, who loved him dearly, watched her son riding away with the five friends, tears in her eyes, until they disappeared from view.

Milarepa thought about returning to his mother, with tender feelings in his heart, wondering if he would ever see her again.

In the village some days later, there was a rumor that White Jewel's son had gone away to learn magic.

On the journey to Ü, Milarepa sold the big, beautiful white horse and the dye in exchange for gold. He and his five friends saw some monks, and Milarepa asked them they knew of a master in the area who was skilled in magic, spells and hailstorms. One of the monks answered, saying:

“I know a lama named Terrifying Conqueror. He has a great power in charms, spells and terrible incantations.” He gave Milarepa directions to that lama’s home.



When they arrived at the lama’s home, the five friends offered the magician lama some small gifts, but Milarepa offered the lama all he had – the gold and turquoise – and said:

“I further offer you my body, speech and mind. My neighbors and certain people in my village cannot bear the happiness of others. Have compassion and grant me the most powerful spell that can be cast on my village. Also, please grant me food and clothing while I am here.”

The lama smiled, and answered, “I shall think about what you have told me.”



But he did not teach them the real dark secrets of magic. After about a year, all he taught them were a few spells, words that made objects float in the air as if there was no gravity, and some useful practices, like perhaps hearing or seeing things that are far away, or reading minds of others.

The five friends of Milarepa were getting

ready to leave. But Milarepa was not satisfied. The practices he learned were not powerful enough to have any effect on his village. He remembered the words of his mother - that she would kill herself if he returned without his spells having an effect on the village. So he didn't leave.

His friends said, "Good News, aren't you leaving with us?" He answered, "I haven't learned enough magic."

One of them said, "The formulas he taught us are supremely magical if only you work hard to master them. The lama himself said he had no others."

They thanked the lama and left. Milarepa went with them for a little while, and then they wished each other good health, and they continued to their home villages, and Milarepa went back to the lama.

The lama, from the terrace of his house, saw Milarepa returning, and said to some of his students who were with him, "Of the many students who have come to me, none is more loving than Good News, and there will never be another like him. The proof is that this morning he didn't say goodbye, and now he has come back. When he came here for the first time, he told me that the people of his village and his neighbors couldn't bear the happiness of others. He asked me for magic and offered me his body, speech and mind. Such persistence he has! If the story he told is true, it would be a pity not to give him the secrets of black magic."

One of the students told Milarepa what the lama had said. Milarepa joyfully said to himself, "At last, it's settled, I will get the real secrets of magic." He went to the lama, and put his head to the lama's feet, saying, "Precious lama, there are three of us, my mother, my sister and myself. My uncle and aunt, a few neighbors and some villagers have become our enemies. Through treatment we did not deserve, they made us miserable. I didn't have the strength to defend myself. That is why my mother sent me to learn magic. If I return home without a single sign of magic resulting from my efforts, my mother will kill herself before my eyes. It is to keep her from destroying herself that I have not left. That is why I am asking you for the real secrets of magic." Milarepa was overwhelmed with emotion, and tears ran down his face.

The lama asked, "In what way have the people of your village harmed you?"

Sobbing, Milarepa told his story. He told how his father had died, and after his death, how his aunt and uncle had crushed his mother, sister and him with misery.

Tears fell from the lama's eyes. He said, "If what you say is true, it is a sad situation. The magic that I practice will do. But we must not hurry. Others have given me great valuable gifts like fortunes in gold, tea, silk, horses and yaks. But only you have given me your body, speech and mind. I am going to check to see if what you have told me is true, right away."

He sent a monk who could run very fast to Milarepa's village. When he returned, he said, "Precious lama, Good News has told the truth. He needs to be taught much magic."

The lama said, "If I had told you much magic right away, I fear that you, with your stubbornness, would have made me regret it. But now, since you are sincere, you must go to another master for further instructions. In the region of Hub Khulung lives a lama called Ocean of Virtues who is a great doctor and magician. I gave him my secret formulas, and he taught me how to call down hailstorms with the tip of one finger. After that, we became friends. Now, those who come to me to learn magic, I must send to him, and those who go to him to learn how to cause hailstorms, he must send to me. Go with my son and find him."

The lama gave his son and Milarepa food and supplies for their journey, and gifts to give his magician friend.



When they arrived in Nub Khulung, they found the magician, who was a young lama.

Milarepa offered him a letter from his magician lama, along with the gifts.

Milarepa told the young magician lama his story in detail, and begged the young lama to teach him magic.

The lama answered, "My friend is a loyal friend and true to his word. I shall teach you all sorts of magic. For this purpose, you must build a hut on the top of this mountain which will put you out of reach of any other humans."

He and the lama built a hut made of large wooden logs, surrounded by large stone blocks with no openings, so no one could see a door or way of entering. Then the lama gave him the magic words.

They chanted the words for seven days, and then the lama said that is enough time. But Milarepa said, "My magic must work at a distance. I ask to continue for another seven days." The lama said, "Very well, continue."

On the evening of the fourteenth day, the lama returned and said, "Tonight around the mandala on the shrine, there will be a sign that magic has taken place."

And sure enough, the spirit guardians of the magicians said, "For several days you have repeatedly been calling us. Here is what you wanted." They showed the heads of 35 people.

The next morning, the lama came to Milarepa and said, "Of those who were to be destroyed, two people remain. Should they be destroyed also, or should they be left alive?"

Full of joy, Milarepa said, "I beg you to let them live, so they may know my vengeance and my justice." So, the aunt and uncle were not destroyed.

Milarepa left the hut he had built. He was curious about how the spell actually had worked on the people in his village.

He found out later that there had been a wedding feast for his uncle's oldest son. There were 35 people at the uncle's house - his sons and their wives, and the other men who hated Milarepa and his family. The other guests who had been friendly toward Milarepa's family were on their way to the feast. The uncle and aunt had gone outside to discuss the meal to be served, and the speech to be given.

At that moment, a servant of the uncle had gone out to get water from the well. When she returned, she looked toward the stable which was the basement of the house. Instead of seeing the horses in the stable, she saw huge scorpions, spiders, snakes and toads. She was terrified, and ran away.



Suddenly, the horses in the stable began jumping up and kicking each other. All the rearing, kicking horses slammed against the wooden pillars supporting the house, causing the pillars to collapse. That caused the walls to collapse, and the house fell on the people inside.



Soon, the inside of the house was filled with dead bodies covered in a cloud of dust and rubble.

The aunt and uncle, and others outside the house began weeping. Milarepa's sister Peta saw them, and ran back to get her mother.

She cried out, "Mother! Mother! Uncle's house has collapsed and many people are dead. Come and see!"

Milarepa's mother gave a cry of joy, and went to look. She saw the uncle's house destroyed, and heard the shrieks of the villagers.



As happy as she was shocked, she tied a scrap of cloth on a long stick and waved it in the air, shouting out in a loud voice:

"Well, villagers and neighbors, the uncle and aunt had said to us, if you are many, make war on us, and if we are few, cast spells. So this is how we, few in number, have gotten more by magic than we could have gotten by war!

Think of the people who were upstairs in that house, and the treasures they had. I have lived long enough to see and enjoy this spectacle that was brought about by

my son. Imagine what my happiness will be from today onward!"

She shouted so loud that even the people who were inside their houses heard her cry of vengeance. Some of them said, "She is right." Others said, "She may be right, but she is too brutal."

The villagers gathered together, after hearing her announce that it was by her son's magic power that the people had been killed. One of them said, "She is not satisfied by causing this

disaster – now she rejoices in it. It is going too far.” Another one said, “Torture her and then rip her heart out!” Yet another said, “What is the use of killing her? What has happened to us is really her son’s doing. You must first of all find her son and kill him. Afterward it is easier to kill the mother.” The others agreed.

Milarepa was now in great danger of being killed, because of the villager’s feelings of revenge toward him.

QUESTIONS:

1. How did White Jewel feel when she heard Milarepa singing? (angry)
2. How do you think Milarepa felt when his mother heard him singing? (guilty)
3. What did White Jewel want Milarepa to do to the aunt and uncle? (learn magic and destroy them)
4. Did Milarepa agree to learn magic as his mother asked? (yes)
5. Did the first magician immediately teach Milarepa spells to destroy his aunt and uncle? (no)
6. Why did Milarepa decide not to destroy his aunt and uncle? (so they could see the power of his revenge)
7. How did Milarepa’s mother feel when she saw that Milarepa had killed 35 people? (happy and shocked)

DHARMA DISCUSSION - REVENGE:

“Although I have a good cause for anger, I shall fulfill the teachings of the lama.”

- Milarepa (The Life of Milarepa, p. 109)

“How can one practice patience if there is no one to be angry with?”

- Milarepa (The Life of Milarepa, p. 114)

“The words of my aunt are words of anger. Were I to speak the same language, we would destroy one another.” - Milarepa (The Life of Milarepa, p. 115)

“My cousins and my next of kin are today my enemies, having made war against us. This . . . is an example of ephemeral illusion, an example which summons me to meditation.”

- Milarepa (The Life of Milarepa, p. 106)

What does revenge mean? Hurting someone in return for hurting you.
Before you actually try to hurt someone, you have thoughts and feelings of revenge,
The feeling of anger and desire to hurt someone who has hurt you in some way.
Do you remember having revengeful feelings? Maybe when someone insulted you?
Or took something away from you? Or said something bad about you to others?
Or broke something of yours? Or was unfriendly to you?
What happens if you actually take revenge?
Such as if you insult the person in return, break something of theirs, or hit them?
They might hurt you in return! They might hurt you even more than you hurt them!
And then what? Do you really want to get in a big fight?
And whether they hurt you back or not, what kind of karma is that for you? Negative karma!
Which leads to negative results for you, even if they were bad and you think they deserved it.

So it's extremely important to learn how to react when someone insults or hurts you.
Maybe we can tell the teacher or a parent, when they are there.
But what if there is no parent or teacher nearby?
We have to control our anger by ourselves. How can you do that?
If someone insults you, remember that an insult is only what that person is thinking right then,
because of his own jealousy, anger, hatred, or ignorance.
And you shouldn't let that person's insult bring you down to his level of anger, hatred and
ignorance.
Remember that he is making bad karma and will have to suffer the result – and you don't want
to join in with his ignorance, get angry and make bad karma for yourself.
Don't be scared of being teased or called bad names. It happens to everyone.
Remember that you are good, because you practice Dharma, and they can't make you less good
–unless you let them make your anger get out of control.
If you feel you must say something back to the person, you can say something that isn't
insulting, such as "That's what you think," "that's your opinion."
You improve yourself, and become stronger in your good character, if you can ignore insults,
and resist the urge to fight or say something insulting back.
So the person insulting or hurting you is actually helping you to become a stronger, more
Dharmic person!

ACTIVITY – ROLE PLAY:

Teacher makes slips of paper with general insults such as, "You're stupid," "you're a baby,"
"you're a loser," "you're a nerd," "you're a geek" (but not insults that could reflect a student's
personal appearance or behavior).
Students each choose one or two partners for the exercise. The students imagine that they are
coming home from school, or on the playground. Teacher gives one of the partners a slip of
paper, and the student says what is written on it to the other partner. The other partner acts
out or says what he might do in a real situation where he is being insulted.