

THE LIFE OF MILAREPA Part 29 – Desire and Anger

Instead of staying in a cave up in the mountains as Milarepa suggested, Rechungpa wanted to stay in a village temple, that would have at least some basic comforts - a warm place to sleep, food and drink offered by the villagers, and people to talk to. So Milarepa agreed to take him to a place called Poto to teach the Dharma. When they arrived in Poto, Milarepa said,

“Rechungpa, you go and fetch some water; I’ll build a fire.”



Rechungpa got the water, and then as he was standing on a hillside overlooking a big, beautiful field, he saw a Tibetan wild donkey, called a kiang, laying down giving birth. When the baby donkey was born, he stood up, his tiny body trembling. Rechungpa expected it to start drinking milk from the mother. But it didn’t.

Instead, the little baby donkey grew bigger and bigger and then gave birth to its own baby donkey!

And at the same time, the mother donkey gave birth to another baby donkey. Then each of the baby donkeys grew bigger and each gave birth to a baby donkey. And those baby donkeys each grew and gave birth to a baby donkey.



This went on until there were 100 wild donkeys. They ran around, joyfully playing with each other.

Rechungpa stood there for a while, amazed by this magical and beautiful sight. He thought, "These wild donkeys are more wonderful than any that I've seen before."

Meanwhile, Milarepa had built a fire, and then he opened the books that Rechungpa had brought back from India. He prayed that the dakinis' teachings that he wanted Rechungpa to bring from India in the books be protected by the dakinis, as those teachings were good for all beings in the world. And he prayed for the Dharma protectors to get rid of the black magic teachings of the non-Buddhists in the books that would be harmful to beings in the world. Tearing the covers off the books, he threw the books in the fire, except for a few special pages.

Rechungpa, still far away watching the donkeys, noticed that one of the more powerful donkeys turned into a wolf that chased all the other donkeys over the mountain. He nervously thought,

"Oh, I've been distracted! If I don't get back quickly, Milarepa will scold me." He hurried back.

When he got close to where Milarepa was, he could smell burning paper. What paper could be burning? He was terribly worried, thinking, "Is that my books that are burning?"

When he arrived, he saw Milarepa, and he saw the empty, flat book covers lying on the ground. His guru had destroyed his precious books! The books that he went through so much time and trouble to get, all the way from India! He felt like his heart would pop out of his chest, he was so upset.

With great tension in his voice, he asked, "Where have my books gone?"

Milarepa answered, "It took you so long to get the water, I thought that you had died. Thinking you were dead, I had no use for them; they would just be a distraction from doing good things. So I burned all these useless books. What took you so long?"

Rechungpa thought, "My guru has such anger and attachment that he would dare to do something like this to me! Maybe I should go back to the great guru Tipupa who gave me the dakini teachings in India. Or I should go somewhere else."

Rechungpa completely lost his faith in Milarepa, and just stayed silent for a while. Then he said aloud, "Because I stayed and watched the show of the 100 wild donkeys, I lost all this. Going to India with the gold that Milarepa himself had given me, and ignoring all the pain and suffering of my body and mind to make that long, dangerous journey to India, now all of that was for nothing. I will go to another land."

Milarepa said, "Rechungpa, my son, you don't have to lose your faith. This is the result you got from your own distraction at the wild donkey show. Son, if you like shows so much, I will give you a show to watch. Now, look!"



Then, on the crown of Milarepa's head appeared a throne on which was seated Marpa, above whom appeared the great original form of Buddha, called Vajradhara, and the other gurus of the lineage, Tilopa and Naropa. On either side of Milarepa's eyes and ears were the sun and moon. From his nostrils came light rays, like strands of yarn, radiating with the five colors. From between his eyebrows was a circle of hair that radiated light rays. Above him were all the Sanskrit letters, circling around with light. Over his heart appeared the endless knot symbol.

As he showed all these amazing wonders all around his body, Milarepa sang a song to explain each of them, including these words:

“If you know how to look with faith,
All the blessings you desire will fall in your hands like rain.
Son, if something is wondrous, then this is wondrous.
Though the wild donkey show was great, they are only animals.”

Rechungpa sat there and listened to the song with resentment – anger, his eyes looking away. Then he said,

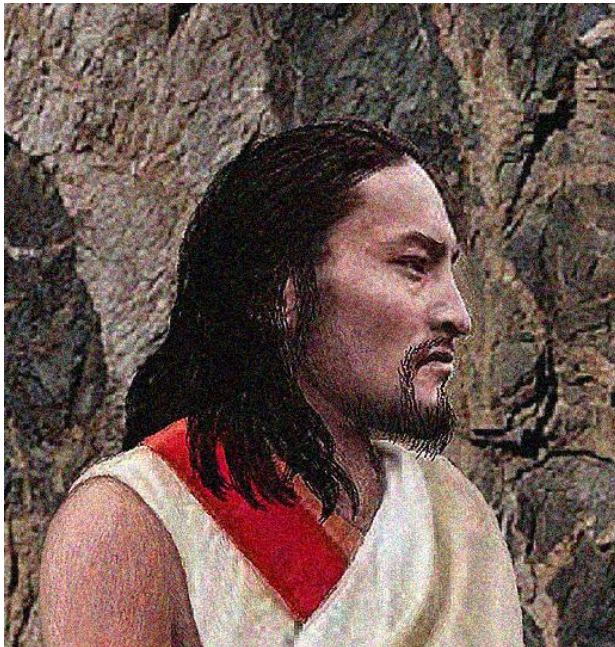
“I didn’t knowingly do anything bad; the show of the wild donkeys was more interesting. Now, please give me back my books.”

He continued sitting there with dark feelings of resentment. Getting up, he stomped around, and then sat down again, propping his chin up with his hands, elbows on his knees. He began humming a song.

Then, Milarepa transformed his body so it was like shining water, with the well-known deities appearing all through it. He sang a song explaining the deities at his heart, navel, forehead, and top of his head.

In response, Rechungpa said, “The signs of your accomplishments are wondrous indeed. But I don’t have my books. So I’m not impressed. Please give back my books.”

Then Milarepa moved around, floating straight through rocks, boulders and trees as if they weren’t there. He zipped around riding on a boulder. Then he went to the river, and sat on its surface as if sitting on a floor. Fire blazed from his body, and then water spouted from it. Then he made his body multiply into many bodies, and then all the bodies joined back into one. Then he went into the sky and sat in mid-air for a while.



Rechungpa said, “Your signs of accomplishment are like children’s play. All of this wild behavior is not impressive at all. It’s just irritating. If you have great compassion, then please give me back my books.”

Milarepa said, “Son, don’t lose faith in your father. If you can think of me with devotion, everything you experience will serve as your books.

Then Milarepa went to a path that had been blocked by a huge boulder. As if it were a mound of dough, he cut the boulder, lifted it like water, and stamped it down like mud. Then he took the boulder and with one hand, threw it into the big river down in the valley.

He sang,

“Son, Rechungpa, listen once more. If you know how to see your father with devotion, all good things will fall like rain for you, even if you don’t want them. All you need will come to you. If

something is wondrous, then this is wondrous. The wild donkey show was great, but it was only animals. Son, Rechungpa, change your outlook.”

Rechungpa said, “If you perform the miracle of restoring my books, then that will make me have faith. Other than that, I am not impressed.” Still, he didn’t have faith in his guru.



Then, holding out the white cloth that he wore with his hands like wings, Milarepa took off into the sky from the edge of the cliff and like a vulture, he soared in the air. Then like a hawk, he took off flying fast, and then like lightning, he darted down. He sang to Rechungpa while he flew. In the song, Milarepa revealed that he had created the wild donkeys to teach Rechungpa a message. He sang,

“I, the old father Milarepa, this magical body that I displayed,
This wonderful and miraculous show, you didn’t think was great at all.
But the hundred wild donkeys, you thought that show was truly great.
This is a sign, Rechungpa, of your incorrect view.
All the various miracles I performed still could not make you have faith.
Faithless students of this polluted age, when I think of them, this yogi feels sad.

Son, Rechungpa, listen here.
Solid wood and horns that are hard,
If you try to bend them, then they will be bent.
But there is no bending your hardened mind.
Bend your mind from within, Rechungpa.

Tigers of the south and yaks of the north,
if you try to tame them, then they will be tamed.
But you won’t tame your self-clinging – your self-centeredness.
Tame your strong self-clinging, Rechungpa.

Birds of the sky and mice of the earth.
If you try to catch them, they can be caught.
But you won’t catch your confused mind.
Catch your confusion with mindfulness, Rechungpa.

A loving father and kindhearted mother,
If you try to leave them, then they can be left.
But you won't leave this bad attitude and ego.
Leave your bad attitude and ego, Rechungpa.

The rocks of the mountains both here and over there,
If you try, you can meet them face to face.
But you won't meet your own face of wisdom.
Look at your own face, your own mind, Rechungpa."

Milarepa lifted higher and higher into the sky, until he was out of sight.

The words to that song affected Rechungpa very deeply. Now he understood the flaws and weaknesses in his mind. Sitting there totally alone, Rechungpa felt a deep regret, and great faith arose in his heart. He thought,

"Now Jetsun Milarepa has gone. Since my mind was not controlled, I wouldn't let go of a few measly books. And then, though the guru Jetsun showed all these miracles, still, faith in him didn't arise in me. Now, out of disgust with me, he has gone away to a heavenly world. Someone with wrong views like me can't go to a heaven-world. What use are any books without the guru? I will just throw myself off this cliff."

Thinking this, he wished that in all his future lives he would always be with Milarepa, and that his mind would be together with Milarepa's. Then with all his might, he jumped off the cliff. His body landed hard, causing severe pain. The shadow of Milarepa, who was flying in the air, fell across his injured body. Rechungpa, wailing with despair, tried to fly up into the sky, but couldn't get his body to fly. Then on foot, he ran, stepping on the shadow of Milarepa as he followed after his guru. He heard a voice. It was Milarepa, who instructed him,

"For your demons of mistaken thoughts that clouded your mind, feel the regret and then confess them."

Rechungpa, weeping, tears streaming down his face, offered a song to Milarepa:

"Father of wisdom, love and power,
Jetsun guru, please listen to me.
Whatever appearances you showed me,
I, Rechungpa was unable to see, as I had a wrong way of thinking.
Who is the one to whom I joyfully ask whether he is well, to whom I make prostrations with devotion, from whom I receive blessings and instructions, who is my refuge?
It is you, Jetsun.
You cared for me with compassion, this is the truth in my heart.
From now on, control my negative conduct,
Please protect me, a beggar who has had the wrong way of thinking."

He went up and hugged Milarepa with such force that he fainted for a moment. Then when he finally let go, they walked together to the cave. Milarepa said,

“Rechungpa, if you wish to become enlightened, you must be able to meditate according to the key instructions. For us, books on logic and formal Dharma and the black magic of the non-Buddhists is useless. Because the teachings of the dakinis is valuable to me, it wasn’t burned. The other books, however, I burned because I was afraid they would lead a person into the lower worlds. With so many books on logic and formal Dharma, I feared you’d become someone who just talks about scripture without practicing, without really understanding it. Son, don’t have great anger; it will burn your mind. Don’t suffer too much; your mind and body will be wasted.”

Rechungpa thought, “Previously, I showed much respect and service to my guru, but I still need to do more.” And he made a promise to do so.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Rechungpa enjoy watching, that distracted him from returning quickly to Milarepa? (the wild donkeys)
2. Why did he become angry when he returned to Milarepa? (his books were burned)
3. Why did Milarepa burn the books? (they included black magic and subjects that Milarepa thought were harmful or useless)
4. Why did Milarepa show miracles to Rechungpa? (so he would have faith in Milarepa)
5. Why didn’t Rechungpa have faith in Milarepa when he saw the miracles? (because Rechungpa was angry about his books being destroyed)
6. What happened to Milarepa that finally made Rechungpa’s anger disappear? (he flew away and disappeared into the sky)

DHARMA DISCUSSION – Desire and Anger

“I realize attachment and anger are suffering’s cause. I’ve cut all such ropes and tormented mind states . . . [C]linging creates suffering for oneself.” p. 545.

“Son, don’t have great anger; it will burn your mind. Don’t suffer too much; your mind and body will be wasted.” p. 477.

*"In the natural state of my mind,
I realize attachment and anger are the cause of suffering.
I've cut all the attachments and tormented states of mind. . . ." p. 545.*

"You work for the desires of this life. But you won't get what you want through negativity." p. 289.

"Abandoning negative actions, I feel good. With my efforts in merit, I feel good. With no anger or malevolence, I feel good." p. 108.

"When adverse conditions give the mind difficulty, be on the lookout for the arising of aggression.

When encountering money and things of desire, be on the lookout for the arising of attachment." p. 91.

- Milarepa

How was Rechungpa feeling during most of this story? Miserable.
He was unhappy until the very end of the story.
Why? Because his precious books were gone, destroyed.
He had a strong desire to get the teachings - the books - and he worked so hard to get them, traveling on a long, dangerous journey to India.
He was very attached to them, and wanted to keep them safe.
So, when they were destroyed, how did he feel? Extremely angry.

Desire means wanting something.
Wanting to have something, wanting to do something, wanting something to happen.

Of course, our desires don't always work out the way we want them to.
Sometimes we don't get what we really want.
Or we finally get something we really desired, and it gets lost, broken, stolen, or taken away.
Or when we really want to do something, then for some reason we can't do it.
And then how do we feel? Disappointed, frustrated, unhappy, sad, miserable, or angry.
If we really strongly desire something, then we are very attached to it, as Rechungpa was so attached to the books. And then if we can't have it, we might get angry.
So, strong desire and anger go together. Strong desire leads to strong anger.

What happens if we have many strong desires?
Then we get angry many times - each time when things don't go our way.
So then we feel miserable so many times; so often we suffer terribly.
On the other hand, when we don't have so many desires, then we don't get angry so often.
And then we feel more peaceful, more satisfied.

So what is the key to not getting angry so often? Not having so many strong desires.

But, we all have desires - we all want things to make us feel happy.

And there are many desires that are very good for us and for others.

Can you think of some good desires, things that you want that are good for you or others?

Some examples are: doing well in school, visiting friends, playing a sport.

Yet, some desires aren't necessary, because they cause us more misery than they are worth.

Can we limit them so we don't have so many strong desires and then so much disappointment and anger? Yes.

How can we limit our unnecessary desires?

You can start by noticing how you feel when you don't get what you want.

When you notice how unhappy you feel, ask yourself, "Do I really need this? Is it worth it, getting so upset when I don't have it? Do I want to keep on getting upset, again and again, over little things like this?"

If you're angry when you can't have what you want, and your anger isn't going away easily, try to remember Rechungpa, how he was thinking over and over again about his books, feeling more and more angry and aggressive toward Milarepa.

If you think over and over about wanting what you can't have, you're "feeding" your anger, making it worse, like Rechungpa.

Instead, appreciate what you have.

Remember that you already have what you really need, and you are lucky, because so many other kids in the world don't have even basic things that they need.

Remember Rechungpa finally realizing how lucky he was to have a wonderful guru, appreciating what he had, rather than brooding in anger about the books.

Think about the kindness of someone – anyone – to distract you from your anger.

Remember Rechungpa finally noticing the kindness of Milarepa rather than focusing on what he did that was upsetting.

If you feel miserable because you want something that someone else has, think about karma.

That person has the karma right now to have that thing that you like. Let him or her enjoy it.

When you think like that, then you are creating good karma for yourself.

Remember not to try to get what you want through negativity, such as begging and bothering your parents, stealing, cheating or being unfair to others. This only creates negative karma that brings bad results in your future.

You feel much better if you work honestly for something you want, saving your money for it.

When you are in a store, notice whether you are tempted to buy things that are unnecessary.

Being aware of when we are being tempted helps us have control over our desires.

ACTIVITY – Make a Desire Monster and an Anger Monster

Make a monster like in the previous chapters, but make the Desire Monster glamorous, colorful, with a face that shows craving for enjoyment.

Perhaps you can make an Anger Monster with red yarn, like a face that turns red in anger.

The toy monsters we make are to remind us of our own inner Desire Monster and Anger Monster.

