

CHAPTER 3 – HOLY MAN MAKES A HORRIBLE SCENE

In the town of Savatthi lived a woman who was a devoted supporter of an ascetic—a man without a home and with very few belongings who is trying to become enlightened—named Pāṭhika. She respected him as a holy man, so she prepared food for him every day and gave him whatever he needed as if he was her own son.

The Buddha was teaching in Savatthi at that time, and the woman’s friends and neighbors went to hear him teach. When they returned, they told the woman that the Buddha was the best teacher—so inspiring, so full of wisdom and knowledge, far greater than any other spiritual teacher they had ever heard of—and that he was able to make them truly understand the Dharma and transform their lives, leading them to real peace and deep happiness. They would often say,

“Oh, how wonderful is the teaching of the Buddhas!”

When the woman heard her neighbors praising the Buddha like that, she wanted to go to the monastery and hear the Buddha, too. Out of respect for Pāṭhika, the ascetic she was supporting, she asked his permission to go and hear the Buddha. She said to him,



“Noble sir, I want to go and hear the Buddha.”

He responded, “Don’t go.”

She told him later, several times, that she wanted to go to the monastery and hear the Buddha teach. He responded each time

by simply telling her not to go.

The woman thought to herself, “Since this ascetic will not permit me to go to the monastery to hear the Dharma, I will invite the Buddha to my own house and hear the Dharma right here.”

That evening, she said to her son, “Go and invite the Buddha to accept lunch from me tomorrow.”

The boy left the house to go to the monastery, but out of respect for the ascetic to whom his mother was so devoted, he went to visit Pāṭhika first.

The ascetic asked him, “Where are you going?”

The boy replied, "By my mother's instruction, I am going to invite the Buddha."

Pāṭhika said, "Don't go to him."

The boy responded, "Okay, but I am afraid of my mother, so I have to go. I am going."

Pāṭhika said, "Let the two of us eat the fine foods prepared for him. Don't go."

The boy said, "No, my mother will scold me."

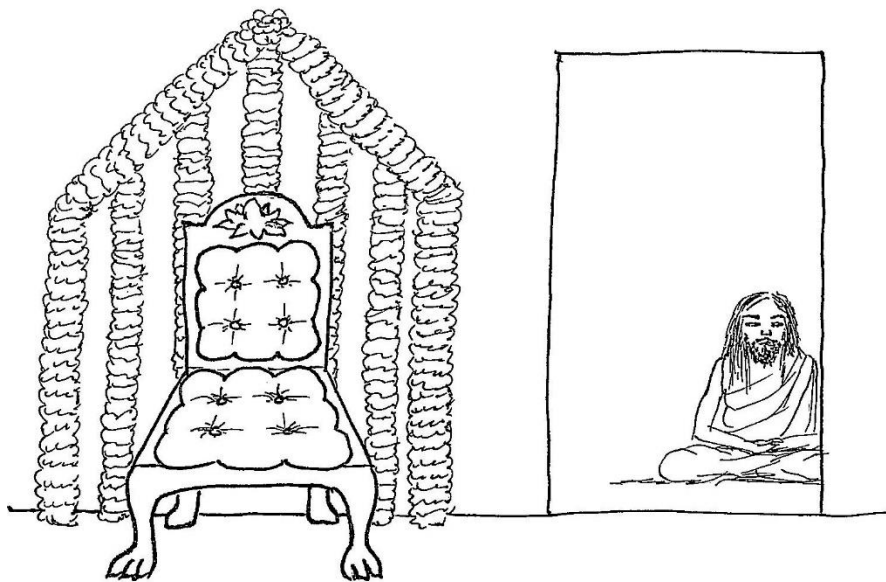
The ascetic had another idea, and said, "Well then, go. But when you go and invite the Buddha, don't tell him where the house is, on what street it is, or what road to take to get there. Instead, act as if you live nearby, and when you leave, run off as if you intend to take a different road, and then come back here."

The boy listened to these instructions and then went to the monastery. When he got an opportunity to approach the Buddha, he went up to him and invited him to lunch the next day. As directed by the ascetic, the boy didn't tell the Buddha the address or directions to the house, and he left walking quickly in the direction of a road that didn't lead to his house, and then went back to the ascetic.

When he arrived, Pāṭhika asked him, "What did you do?"

The boy replied, "Everything you told me to do, noble sir."

The ascetic said, "You have done very well. Now tomorrow the both of us shall eat the fine foods prepared for him."



The next day, early in the morning, Pāṭhika went to the woman's house and, taking her son with him, sat down in the back room of the house.

The neighbors smeared the house with cow-dung, which was the traditional way of freshening up the house. Cow dung in those days in India was considered clean. According to the traditions in India for

receiving very important guests such as kings, the neighbors hung strands of five types of flowers as decorations around the area where their honored guests would sit. They brought an expensive chair for the Buddha to sit in, as they didn't know what type of seat to prepare for a Buddha. They admired him so much that they thought he should be treated like a king, and didn't know that he should be given a simple, clean seat appropriate for a monk.

Meanwhile, early in the morning the Buddha took his bowl and outer robe and went straight to the woman's house. He didn't need directions, a street name or an address. Buddhas never need to be told directions or how to get to any place; they know the paths that lead to wherever they are going.

When the Buddha arrived in front of her house, the woman went out to greet him, and respectfully bowed down to him and led him into her house. She gave him the wonderful food she had prepared. When the Buddha finished his meal, the woman took his bowl, wanting him to speak some words of Dharma in appreciation for the meal.

She listened to the Buddha and, hearing his beautiful voice teaching the Dharma for the first time in her life, she was full of happiness. With great joy she applauded him, exclaiming suddenly, "Well said! Well said!"

Pāṭhika, sitting in the back room, heard the woman's applause and words of praise for the Buddha. He couldn't stand to hear his own supporter adoring some other teacher. Why was she ignoring him and getting all excited over this monk? Fuming with rage and unable to control himself, he leapt up, entered the room where the Buddha was teaching, and announced loudly to everyone,

"She is no longer my student!"



Turning toward the woman, he exclaimed to her with contempt, "Hag, you are lost for applauding this man like that!"

He shouted that she was disloyal, disrespectful and neglectful to him and therefore she was a disloyal, rude and uncaring person. He bellowed that she was ignorant and foolish for running after other teachers whom she knows nothing about.

Then he angrily yelled out all kinds of insults to the Buddha. He accused the Buddha of stealing other teachers' students, taking

over villages, brainwashing and forcing men to leave their families to become his shaven-headed monks. He seemed to be venting all the anger and jealousy that he had been holding in his mind. Then he quickly left the woman's home, still shouting insults.

The woman was extremely embarrassed by Pāṭhika's insulting words. When the Buddha continued teaching, her mind was so upset by Pāṭhika's terrible behavior that she couldn't concentrate her attention on the Buddha's teaching. The man whom she thought was a holy man, whom she had been supporting with such devotion and respect, had insulted her and shocked her with horrible behavior that was totally inappropriate for a holy man. And much worse, he had shouted insults to her precious and most respected guest, the Buddha, in her own home! She felt so ashamed.

The Buddha asked her, "Are you unable to fix your mind on my teaching?"

She replied, "Good and venerable sir, my mind is completely upset by the insulting words of this ascetic."

The Buddha said, "One should not think about the talk of such an ignorant person; one should pay no attention to behavior of people like him. One should think about only what one himself has done and not done, one's own good and bad deeds."

Questions:

1. Why did the woman support the ascetic, giving him food and whatever he needed? (she respected him as a holy man)
2. Why do you think he didn't want her to visit the Buddha? (he was jealous and wanted her only to support him and be loyal to him)
3. What did the ascetic plan to do when the woman would make good food for the Buddha the next day, and the Buddha doesn't come? (eat the food that was prepared for the Buddha)
4. How did the Buddha know how to get to the woman's house? (Buddhas always know the way to get to any place they are going)
5. How did the woman feel when Pāṭhika insulted her and the Buddha? (shocked, embarrassed, ashamed)
6. What did the Buddha tell the woman not to think about, not to pay attention to? (the words and behavior of an ignorant person)

What the Buddha Said:

“Na parēsaṃ vilōmāni, na parēsaṃ katākataṃ, attanō va avekkheyya katāni akatāni ca.”

“One should not look into the faults of others, into things they did and did not do. One should instead consider what oneself has done and left undone.”

Dhammapada 50 (4:7)

Dharma discussion – Misbehavior of others:

Why was the woman in the story so shocked and embarrassed?

The ascetic, Pāṭhika, was supposed to be her spiritual friend and teacher, and was a guest in her house, yet he behaved so terribly toward the Buddha.

She was shocked that someone whom she trusted and respected so much suddenly misbehaved so badly.

Maybe she felt foolish, betrayed or angry for having respected and supported him as a holy man for so long when now he seemed not to be very holy at all.

Think of a time when someone shocked you with their terrible misbehavior.

Can you remember your thoughts and feelings at that time?

Maybe you felt scared that the person might hurt you or someone else.

Maybe you worried that the person might damage something.

If the person bullied you or someone else, or said something insulting or disrespectful, maybe you felt angry or hateful or you felt like taking revenge.

If a friend or family member shocked you with their misbehavior, maybe you felt upset, embarrassed or ashamed, like the woman in the story.

The Buddha teaches us not to think about other people’s misbehavior.

But it’s difficult to stop thinking about it when it makes us have these feelings—these strong emotions—of fear, worry, embarrassment, shame, anger, hatred or vengeance.

So how can we stop thinking about their misbehavior?

First, we try to calm our emotions.

What do you do to help calm yourself down?

Maybe you like to read, listen to music, go outside, play with a pet, talk to a friend, draw a picture, or write in a journal.

You could also try mindfulness.

One way to practice mindfulness is to go to a quiet place, sit down and close your eyes, and pay close attention to everything you can hear and everything that your body is feeling.

Notice every little sound, but don’t think about it—what it is, where it came from—just keep listening.

Notice everything your body is feeling: for example, the chair or ground underneath you, the warmth of your fingers against each other, the warmth of your toes against each other, the air

going in and out of your nose, the movement of your belly with each breath in and out, your eyelids against your eyes, your tongue against your teeth.

Next, when your mind wanders back to thinking about the person's misbehavior, consider whether there's an ongoing problem or danger with this person that you need to resolve. Are you worried this person will misbehave again and harm you or someone else, or damage something?

If so, then think about what you reasonably can do to avoid harm or prevent the person from causing harm or damage in the future.

Or, are you feeling angry, thinking they should be punished for what they did?

Then consider whether you should report their behavior to an adult who can best handle any consequences for the behavior.

Once you've decided what you can do to avoid future harm or damage, or decided to report their behavior, then there's no need to think about the misbehavior anymore. You have resolved the problem, there's nothing more you can do, worrying more won't help, so let it go! You can let any revengeful thoughts go by remembering that the person will eventually suffer the results of their bad karmas, their bad deeds, and you don't want to make bad karma for yourself by taking revenge, harming that person.

But, if you're still thinking about a person's misbehavior, then consider, is there anything you can learn from their behavior?

Think about whether you sometimes might behave in a similar way.

Maybe you don't behave exactly like that person, but maybe you get overly upset or angry about certain things and snap at others occasionally.

Or, are you focusing on their misbehavior to make yourself feel like you are better than them? Instead of thinking about their "bad," think about your own "bad."

You can remember this by pointing your finger and thinking: "When I point a finger at others, look at my other fingers pointing back toward myself."

Also, at the end of the day, think of your behavior, what you did and said that day, and whether there is anything you could do better next time.

These are ways to practice what the Buddha taught, to look at your own behavior rather than that of others.

If you're still thinking about the person's misbehavior, ask yourself, "Is there is any other good reason to think about it?"

If not, then thinking about it is probably just dragging your thoughts down into negativity – you have more and more thoughts of fear, worry, anger, hatred or vengeance that aren't helping you. This is what the Buddha is teaching us to avoid.

Whenever you think of the misbehavior, try to replace the negative thoughts with positive thoughts.

For example, try to feel compassion for the person who misbehaved, and wish them peace and happiness. If they were peaceful and happy, they wouldn't misbehave.

Feel grateful that you don't have circumstances like those that caused the person to misbehave.