

## DO NOT ASSOCIATE WITH THE IGNORANT

### 5 (2) The Story of a Resident Pupil of Venerable Mahākassapa (Verse 61)

**W**hile residing at the Jētavana Monastery, the Buddha spoke this verse, with reference to a resident pupil of Venerable Mahākassapa.

While Venerable Kassapa was in residence at Pipphali Cave, he had two pupils learning under him. One of these performed his duties faithfully, but the other frequently shirked his duties and sought to take credit for work done by the other. For example, the faithful pupil would set out water for washing the face, and a tooth-stick. Knowing this, the faithless pupil would go to the Venerable and say, "Venerable, water for washing the face is set out, and a tooth-stick. Go wash your face." When it was time to prepare water for bathing the feet and for the bath, he would pursue the same tactics.

The faithful pupil thought to himself, "This fellow is constantly shirking his work and is seeking to take credit for my work. Very well! I will do something about this. So one day, while the faithless pupil was asleep after a meal, he heated water for the bath, poured it into a water-jar, and set it in the back room, leaving only a pint-pot of water steaming in the boiler. In the evening the faithless pupil woke up and saw steam pouring out. "He must have heated water and put it in the bathroom," he thought. So he went quickly to the Venerable, bowed, and said, "Venerable, water has been placed in the bathroom; go and bathe." So saying, he accompanied the Venerable to the bathroom. But when the Venerable saw no water, he said, "Brother, where is the water?" The youth went to the room where the fire was kept, and lowering a ladle into the boiler, and perceived that it was empty. "See what the rascal has done!" he exclaimed. "He has set an empty boiler on the brazier, and then went — who knows where? Of course I thought there was water in the bathroom and went and told the Venerable so." Disappointed, he took a water-jar and went to the bathing-place at the river.

Venerable Kassapa thought, "All this time this young fellow has been shirking from his duties and has sought to take credit for work really done by his brother-pupil." On the following day he refused to accompany the Venerable on his rounds. The Venerable therefore took his other pupil with him to a certain place.

While he was away, the faithless pupil went to the house of a layman who was a supporter of the Venerable. The layman asked him, "Where is the monk?" The Venerable doesn't feel well, and therefore remained at the Monastery." "What then should he have, Venerable?" "Give him such and such food," said the youth, pretending that the monk had told him to ask for it. Accordingly they prepared food such as he asked for, and gave it to him. He took the food, ate it on the way back, and returned to the Monastery.

Now the Venerable had received from his supporter five robes, and these he presented to the youth who accompanied him. The novice dyed them and converted them into under and upper garments for himself. The Venerable admonished the pupil on his behaviour. He resented this advice. The next day, he set fire to the Monastery and ran away. When he died, he was reborn in the Great Hell of Avīci.

#### Explanatory Translation (Verse 61)

*caran̄m attanō seyyan̄m sadisaṃ cē nā adhigaccheyya ekacariyaṃ daḷhan̄m kayirā bālē sahāyatā natthi*

*caran̄m*: as companion; *attanō*: for oneself; *seyyan̄m*: a greater; *sadisaṃ*: on an equal; *cē nā adhigaccheyya*: is not found; *ekacariyaṃ*: being alone; *daḷham kayirā*: should be done; *bālē sahāyatā*: companionship with fools; *natthi*: there is not

People need companions. But if one does not find a person who is better than, or at least equal to oneself, it is better to be alone rather than keep company with foolish people. There is no profitable companionship with fools.

#### Commentary

*sahāyatā*: association; companionship. This verse insists that one should not keep company with immature people. Association with the immature is not at all conducive even to worldly progress; not to speak of spiritual progress.

According to the commentary this term connotes higher morality, insight, Paths, and Fruits of Sainthood. No such virtues are found in the foolish.

Out of compassion, to work for their betterment, one may associate with the foolish but not be contaminated by them.