

Stories from
Buddha's Life

Rebirth of Ahimsika



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Introduction

Rebirth of Ahimsika



They huddled around the blazing log fire, extending their hands towards the leaping flames to catch some heat to ward off the chill. It was peak of winter, a cold night fell early, bringing all activities in that small forest clearing, to a slow halt,

earlier than usual. The still night, leaping flames of the fire throwing shadows of different shapes and forms on the surrounding bush. The crackling sound of the burning logs, eddying smoke rising slowly up the cold air and strange lights of early night all contributed to creation of a blissful ambience had lulled the huddling foursome into a thoughtful and nostalgic silence. Philosophy takes hold of mind in such circumstances and they all felt like talking about things that they had learnt to hide from themselves. They all had some things in common. Each of them had rejected the societies that had spawned them, for some very personal reasons they would not care to talk about. They had gratefully accepted the anonymity offered by the forest, and finding kindred souls had made their tough life somehow tolerable. In each others company, they had found the blanket of security that life had conspired to deny them

They could talk about a variety of topics and concepts on account of varied background and past experiences. Today strangely, it was metaphysical philosophy.

The oldest of them was thinking aloud, ' some of our intimate actions give us more pleasure and our mind keeps positioning us to make us reiterate these actions,so that we get to re enjoy those fleeting moments of pleasure. Over a period of time , this becomes a habit which we eagerly anticipate and enjoy.If there was no pleasure, life would become flat and unbearable for desolate souls like us."

The other three listened patiently , not wishing to interrupt the thoughtprocess. In the type of life they led and struggles they had to contend with, moments of pleasure were few and their memories very faint and unclear.They were more familiar with pain than any pleasure, so the words of the oldman seemed more like a tame joke than profound wisdom. The urge to talk never the less was very much evident and it was a way of life to pass such nights.

The second man thought differently.For him ,talk of pleasure was painful.He said "Ibeg to differ.I think pain rules the life. I think there is pain in every effort weak or strong..You can laugh at the pain but

can not ignore it altogether. It is there alright. As you grow older away from everybody, you seem to feel the pain more frequently."

The mention of pain made them uncomfortable and to hide it from one another, they all laughed uneasily. The third one said as though he wanted to change the subject "I think, you are mistaking pain for fear. Man is dogged more by fear than pain. In all his actions, there is a fear of failure, some thing going very wrong as it happened to many of us. Fear of uncertainty of positive results arising out of our actions. Fear can be kept in check but never conquered totally. Yes weak or strong, fear lurks around you all the time."

The fourth one, the youngest of the lot remained quiet. The others had expected him to talk because normally he was the one who kept them going. He seemed so knowledgeable, with broad forehead and shining countenance. They had heard that he had attended the university at Takshashila, which he had to leave suddenly because his enemies had caught

up with him all of a sudden ,terminating his quest for knowledge and scholarship., and he had to run away. He had been running all the time, from place to place till he found some safety in this forest cover..To night , he was listening to his friends talk about pain and fear and he had endured pain and fear of far greater intensity and frequency than any of the others. There was a time he was known by names like Abhaya and Ahimsiks.The irony of life was such that those names were more cruel appendages of his personality ,as he was always in perpetual fear of discovery and pain as consequence .

The youngster shifted his weight. Actually he was squatting in front of the fire,his troubled face in the shadow , with his buttocks arched over the ground, his feet held together tightly and his chin resting on his round knees. This way he was better able to absorb more heat and handle the cold.As he shifted his position, others leaned in anticipation, thinking he was going to say some thing. They always liked to hear him speak. He had such a rich cultured voice and a knack of saying in simple words, complex feelings

and issues. They hoped he would speak. He pushed himself up and stood towering over them. He was tall and well built. Power oozed from every pore and he locked his fingers and lifted both hands above his head, flexing his muscles. He had the raw power you see in some people. He had trained himself to be a warrior some time back but never came around to testing his strength in any combat situation, because he was always in fear of consequences of his actions. He preferred to run away from situation, than making a stand and testing his strength and fighting skills. He feared that his strength would be his undoing. He was feeling that fear again and wished his friends talked about some thing else.

He turned away from fire and walked towards the distant bushes. They watched him as darkness enveloped him as he stepped out of circle of light thrown by the fire. They shrugged their shoulders in disappointment. The world was full of strange people. Some people preferred to carry their burdens on their own

shoulders, not wanting others to know of their problems. Jagan as they called him was definitely in different mood this night.

Jagan smiled to himself. It is so easy to talk about fear and pain, when you are sitting around your own camp fire., when you feel secure that your friend wont stab your back all of a sudden, when screaming mob is not chasing you. when armed men on swift horses are not chasing you down and you are not dodging silent arrows aimed at you. You don't wait to see if there is any pleasure in the engagement or the violent grip of fear around your neck. Then you run , run as fast as your legs can carry you away and away from that source of fear and pain. He had the intelligence to find a way out of this fear, He even had his own supporters, many in number who would have made him a king. If only he had stopped running and made a stand. He never dared to find out. Because, the fear had the uncanny habit of creating distrust. Intense distrust piled on more fear. Whenever he trusted, he faced more pain . Betrayal, treachery and

flight. That was his way of life earlier..It was like a large wheel, turning over and over fear, trust and pain , one over another always inter linked, keeping him on the move all the time till he found secured shelter in this forest. He had never cared to talk about such experiences. Today, he had heard his friends talk about these aspects so casually. He wondered if any of his friends had suffered that way.

He walked back to the fire in time to hear one of them pose a question, " can pain or fear be used to induce pleasure?"

Second man said, "sure."

"How?",jagan almost shouted.

"Simple, "said the oldman,"transfer it to another person and see how you feel. That would be a very satisfying moment indeed."

They all became very silent, thinking about what the old man had said. They all knew it did not work that way at all. Fear and Pain were permanent perceptions while pleasure was a fleeting one, lasting for a very very small time. Man had not worked out of that problem , yet. It

required a very special person to make pleasure a lasting perception. The world would stop for such a person. They had no idea that such a person was already born and He was closing in on them.

Jagan was puzzled. He was wondering if it was really possible to gain pleasure by transferring your own pain and fears over to another person. Would it work for every one. Importantly would it for him? If so, it would change his life, he thought.

Chapter2

Jagan was walking alone, carrying the load of dead deer which he had just killed. He thought he would not starve to day. He looked around for a secluded spot close to the waterfront, where he could have his meal, wash up and rest with out anyone disturbing him. He felt he was at peace with himself and with the world at large. For him such a feeling was very rare and often very short lived. Whenever he had such a warm sense of contentment, life always played some dirty trick, snatching cruelly his moments of pleasure and leaving him snared again in a web of fear and pain.

Today , he was determined that he would savour this unique feeling of comfort and peace with out any one to interfere with him. It appeared he had thought

too soon about comfort.

His way was blocked by three very tired looking men on very tired looking horses..These men had been riding for long with out food and rest. In their present condition they looked mean and desperate. They were also armed. Jagan could see their long spears with shining pointed ends, held upright on easy stance on their shoulders. Two of them moved their horses on either side of Jagan, effectively bottling him up. Jagan guessed correctly that they were trained soldiers, though tired.

The man in front bent almost double on his horse said ,‘we want that meat.’”

There was menace in that tone which was disconcerting..Jagan said easily , in most friendly tone,“Yes, it is a big beast.We all can have a good meal together.”

The man shook his head in a lazy manner,‘No. You did not hear me properly. I said , we want that meat’

Jagan said faintly bewildered ‘You mean, I can not have my share? That would be ridiculous considering the fact that I killed

the beast in the first place. If I please, I will share my food”

The man said “ You have no choice in this matter” There was no attempt to maintain any politeness .

Jagan felt a flutter in his stomach. He had always dreaded such situations. He felt hot and flushed, with pumping of adrenal in his veins. He had to decide to stay and fight or drop and run away. In the past he had always run away not wanting to test his fighting skills in such situations. He had at some point in his past life had received training in martial arts and gained some amount of proficiency too. But he never trusted his skills .Running away meant being alive for some more time and survival meant a lot more to him than glory of defeating an adversary. For him it was never one fight. It was a fear of consequences of one fight. For him one fight led to another and it would go on and on .It meant to be always on guard and be ever ready to fight, to hold on and on. It was a continuous on set of fear. A loss of fight meant hurt , pain and more fear. Escape meant peace. No

shame was attached to the inclination to stay alive. He was not there to impress any one. Protect yourself for tomorrow. That was his motto in life. So far, that was.

But today was different. He had resolved that nothing would come in his way of having a satisfying meal and following peaceful rest. These three men are not going to change that resolution, he decided. He would not allow fear and prospect of pain due to conflict to change his mindset. today he would test the hypothesis that fear can be transferred and pleasure gained. With his mind set , he faced the challenge boldly .

The man was annoyed that jagan had not complied with his order readily. In anger he shouted

“Come on, we can not wait for ever. Drop the meat and depart.”

The man brought the upright spear from vertical stance to horizontal position in preparation of frontal thrust. His two fisted grip on the long shaft tightened ready to push the point deep into Jagan’s exposed stomach. Jagan had seen many mangled

bodies of soldiers after a skirmish. He was aware that if he did not do something in the next few immediate minutes he would be lying on the ground with his stomach torn wide open and bleeding to death. In a quick un expected move, he threw the beast on the face of advancing soldier totally catching him by surprise. It was a heavy beast and the facial impact knocked the man down .He fell banging his head on an outcrop of a rock.He was out for the count. Jagan followed up smartly snatching the spear from weak hands.

With the spear in his hands now, he whirled around swinging the long shaft in a wide arc slashing a second man's throat .The man on his right moved , striking out with his weapon, a weak action more out of habit than with any intent. Jagan ducked easily under the swinging weapon plunged his point deep into an un suspecting stomach bringing the fight to quick end. The man screamed in pain and dropped dead. The man with the slashed throat was still on his feet ,his one hand pressing the wound to stop the bleeding, the other hand still holding his weapon offensively even though all

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