

BUDDHIST TALES
FOR YOUNG AND OLD

A Man Named Bad (Self Acceptance)

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Once upon a time there was a world famous teacher in Takkasila, in north-western India. He had 500 high class students who learned sacred teachings from him.

It just so happened that one of these high class students had been named 'Bad' by his parents. One day he thought, "When I am told, 'Come Bad', 'Go Bad', 'Do this Bad'. it is not nice for me or others. It even sounds disgraceful and unlucky."

So he went to the teacher and asked him to give him a more pleasant name, one that would bring good fortune rather than bad. The teacher said, "Go. my son, go wherever you like and find a more fortunate name. When you return, I will officially give you your new name."

The young man named Bad left the city, and traveled from village to village until he came to a big city. A man had just died and Bad asked what his name was. People said. "His name was Alive." "Alive also died?" asked Bad. The people answered, "Whether his name be Alive or whether it be Dead, in either case he must die. A name is merely a word used to recognize a person. Only a fool would not know this!" After hearing this, Bad no longer felt badly about his own name - but he didn't feel good about it either.

As he continued on his way into the city, a debt-slave girl was being beaten by her masters in the street. He asked, "Why is she being beaten?" He was told, "Because she is a slave until she pays a loan debt to her masters. She has come home from working, with no wages to pay as interest on her debt." "And what is her name?" he asked. "Her name is Rich." they said. "By her name she is Rich. but she has no money even to pay interest?" asked Bad. They said, "Whether her name be Rich or whether it be Poor, in either case she has no money. A name is merely a word used to recognize a person. Only a fool would not know this!" After hearing this, Bad became even less interested in changing his name.

After leaving the city, along the roadside he met a man who had lost his way. He asked him, "What is your name? " He replied, 'My name is Tourguide.'" "You mean to say that even a Tourguide has gotten lost?" asked Bad. Then the man said, "Whether my name be Tourguide or whether it be Tourist, in either case I have lost my way. A name is merely a word used to recognize a person. Only a fool would not know this!"

Now completely satisfied with his own name, Bad returned to his teacher.

The world famous teacher of Takkasila asked him, "How are you, my son? Have you found a good name?" He answered, "Sir, those

named Alive and Dead both die, Rich and Poor may be penniless, Tourguide and Tourist can get lost. Now I know that a name is merely a word used to recognize a person. The name does not make things happen, only deeds do. So I'm satisfied with my name. There's no point in changing it."

The teacher summarized the lesson his pupil had learned this way - "By seeing Alive as dead, Rich as poor, Tourguide as lost, Bad has accepted himself."

The moral is: "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

