

BUDDHIST TALES
FOR YOUNG AND OLD

A Priest Who Worshipped Luck (Superstition)

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Once upon a time, the Enlightenment Being was born into a high class family in north-western India. When he grew up, he realized his ordinary life could not give him lasting happiness. So he left everything behind and went to live in the Himalayas as a forest monk. He meditated and gained knowledge and peace of mind.

One day he decided to come down from the forests to the city of Rajagaha. When he arrived he stayed overnight in the king's pleasure garden.

The next morning he went into the city to collect alms food. The king saw him and was pleased with his humble and dignified attitude. So he invited him to the palace. He offered him a seat and gave him the best foods to eat. Then he invited him to live in the garden for good. The holy man agreed, and from then on he lived in the king's pleasure garden and had his meals in the king's palace.

At that time there was a priest in the city who was known as 'Lucky Cloth'. He used to predict good or bad luck by examining a piece of cloth.

It just so happened that he had a new suit of clothes. One day, after his bath, he asked his servant to bring the suit to him. The servant saw that it had been chewed slightly by mice, so he told the priest.

Lucky Cloth thought, "It is dangerous to keep in the house these clothes that have been chewed by mice. This is a sure sign of a curse that could destroy my home. Therefore, I can't even give them to my children or servants. The curse would still be in my house!

"In fact, I can't give these unlucky clothes to anyone. The only safe thing to do is to get rid of them once and for all. The best way to do that is to throw them in the corpse grounds, the place where dead bodies are put for wild animals to eat.

"But how can I do that? If I tell a servant to do it, desire will make him keep the clothes, and the curse will remain in my household. Therefore, I can trust this task only to my son."

He called his son to him and told all about the curse of the clothes that were slightly chewed by mice. He told him not even to touch them with his hand. He was to carry them on a stick and go throw them in the corpse grounds. Then he must bathe from head to foot before returning home.

The son obeyed his father. When he arrived at the corpse grounds, carrying the clothes on a stick, he found the holy man sitting by the gate. When Lucky Cloth's son threw away the cursed suit, the holy man picked it up. He examined it and saw the tiny teeth marks made by the mice. But since they could hardly be noticed, he took the suit with him back to the pleasure garden.

After bathing thoroughly, his son told Priest Lucky Cloth what had

happened. He thought, "This cursed suit of clothes will bring great harm to the king's favorite holy man. I must warn him." So he went to the pleasure garden and said. "Holy one, the unlucky cloth you have taken, please throw it away! It is cursed and will bring harm to you!"

But the holy man replied, "No no, what others throw away in the corpse grounds is a blessing to me! We forest meditators are not seers of good and bad luck. All kinds of Buddhas and Enlightenment Beings have given up superstitions about luck. Anyone who is wise should do the same. No one knows the future!"

Hearing about the truly wise and enlightened ones made Priest Lucky Cloth see how foolish he had been. From then on he gave up his many superstitions and followed the teachings of the humble holy man.

The moral is: A fool's curse can be a wise man's blessing.

