

BUDDHIST TALES
FOR YOUNG AND OLD

The Green Wood Gatherer (Laziness)

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Once upon a time there was a world famous teacher and holy man in the city of Takkasila. He had 500 students training under him.

One day these 500 young men went into the forest to gather firewood. One of them came upon a tree with no leaves. He thought, "How lucky I am! This tree must be dead and dry, perfect for firewood. So what's the hurry? I'll take a nap while the others are busy searching in the woods. When it's time to return, it will be easy to climb this tree and break off branches for firewood. So what's the hurry?" He spread his jacket on the ground, lay down on it, and fell fast asleep - snoring loudly.

After a while all the other students began carrying their bundles of firewood back to Takkasila. On their way they passed the snoring sleeper. They kicked him to wake him up and said, "Wake up! Wake up! It's time to return to our teacher."

The lazy student woke up suddenly and rubbed his eyes. Still not fully awake, he climbed up the tree. He began breaking off branches and discovered that they were actually still green, not dry at all. While he was breaking one of them, it snapped back and poked him in the eye. From then on he had to hold his eye with one hand while he finished gathering his bundle of green wood. Then he carried it back to Takkasila, running to catch up. He was the last one back, and threw his bundle on top of the rest.

Meanwhile an invitation arrived to a religious ceremony. It was to be held the next day at a remote village. The holy man told his 500 pupils, "This will be good training for you. You will have to eat an early breakfast tomorrow morning. Then go to the village for the

religious service. When you return, bring back my share of the offerings as well as your own."

The students awoke early the next morning. They awakened the college cook and asked her to prepare their breakfast porridge. She went out in the dark to the woodpile. She picked up the top bundle of the lazy man's green wood. She brought it inside and tried to start her cooking fire. But even though she blew and blew on it, she couldn't get the fire going. The wood was too green and damp.

When the sun came up there was still no fire for cooking breakfast. The students said, "It's getting to be too late to go to the village." So off they went to their teacher.

The teacher asked them, "Why are you still here? Why haven't you left yet?" They told him, "A lazy good-for-nothing slept while we all worked. He climbed a tree and poked himself in the eye. He gathered only green wood and threw it on top of the woodpile. This was picked up by the college cook. Because it was green and damp, she couldn't get the breakfast fire started. And now it's too late to go to the village."

The world famous teacher said, "A fool who is lazy causes trouble for everyone. When what should be done early is put off until later, it is soon regretted."

The moral is: "Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today."