

The dog, the stick, the sufi

A further story of false Sufis amongst us
based on a Sufi story retold by Idries Shah
[Previously published as fb210413 Piya Tan]

A man (a false priest) dressed as a Sufi was walking along one day when he saw a dog on the road, which the Sufi struck hard with his staff. The dog, yelping with pain, ran to the great sage Abu Said. Throwing himself at his feet and holding up his injured paw, he called for justice against the Sufi who had maltreated him so cruelly.

The wise one called them together. To the Sufi he said:

“O heedless one! How is it possible for you to treat a dumb animal* in this manner? Look at what you have done!” [*The dog was only pretending to talk.]

The false Sufi answered:

“Far from its being my fault, it is that of the dog. I did not strike him from a mere whim, but for the reason that he had fouled my robe!”

But the dog persisted in his complaint. Then, the peerless one addressed the dog:

“Rather than waiting for the Ultimate Compensation, allow me to give you a compensation for your pain.”

The dog then said:

“Great and wise one! When I saw this man garbed as a Sufi, I concluded that he would do me no harm. Had I seen instead a man wearing ordinary dress, I would naturally have given him a wide berth.

My real mistake was to assume that the outward appearance of a man of truth indicated safety and kindness. If you desire his punishment, take away from him the robe of the Elect. Deprive him of the costume of the Noble Ones!”

The dog himself was of a certain Rank in the Way. It is wrong to believe that a man must be better than he.

COMMENTARY

The dog had fouled the false Sufi's robes because he knew that it is no true robe. It's very much like the ones we see hanging from the numerous Vinaya-less priests that crowd our midst, even in the shopping malls and entertainment areas, not to mention the temples. However, being a dog (himself pretending to talk, most unlike other dogs), he did not realize that there are consequences to his action. Fortunately, he has a wise and compassionate teacher to turn to.

SUBCOMMENTARY

Priests today are not as predictably silly as the false Sufi in the story. They have read stories like this, even use them as if they were the authors. As for them, they would contact the relevant authorities, like the Dog Pound, get the dog thrown into a pound, and then mercifully put it to sleep if it does not measure to their standards.

Moreover, these modern priests are so busy with their lives that they have no time for dogs. They have countless followers and fans to do that for them. All these FnF's would smilingly believe whatever they say, and scold the dog, even: after all, it is his bad karma to be a dog and should behave like one!

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[an occasional re-look at the Buddha's Example and Teachings]

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