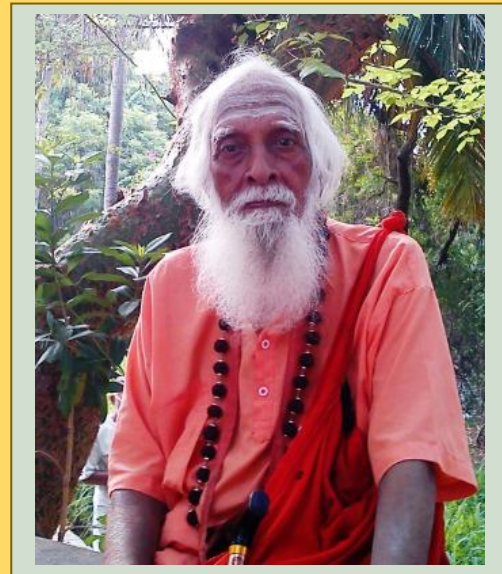


A Fair Judgement

Source: Source: Stories for Inspiration, by Swami Shantananda Puri Maharaj

Message from the Master:

One should accumulate only that much riches
as is sufficient to cater for his livelihood.
Anybody who accumulates more is a thief.



A Fair Judgement

Bodhidharma was the first Buddhist monk to go to China. He was the honoured guest of King Wu who ruled over a fairly big state in China. The king was astonished to see the high acumen, perspicacity and the unerring capacity for judging situations in their correct perspective of Bodhidharma. He decided to appoint him as a judge in his State as he was so far looking after that onerous task himself.

Bodhidharma reminded the king that he had come to China not seeking a job but for propagating the holy teachings of the Buddha. The king refused to relent and the monk was left with no choice but to accept it.

The very first day, a thief was brought before Bodhidharma by the police as he was caught redhanded while stealing some silver vessels in the house of a rich man. The police were also accompanied by the rich owner of the house, whose property the thief tried to steal. The police apprised the Judge in detail about the case of theft and awaited the latter's judgement. After a few routine questions, Bodhidharma announced that the thief was to be imprisoned in the jail for one year and the owner also to be imprisoned for one full year. Such a judgement had no precedent.

The police as also the owner once again explained –

“Your Honour, it seems you have not correctly understood the situation. It is the thief who has tried to steal and deserves to be punished. The owner is an innocent victim whose house was broken open by the thief.” The monk smiled and decreed – “I understand the case very well. My judgement stands.” By that time the owner of the stolen property became panicky at this apparently unreasonable judgement and sent word to the king who was his personal friend. The king himself came to Bodhidharma and took pains to explain the case. Bodhidharma retorted – “Your majesty, I can assure you that I have understood the case very well. While I agree that the thief deserves to be punished, this rich man is equally responsible for the theft. He has been living ostentatiously and had accumulated too much of riches which has not only deprived other people of that much of money and things but has also been responsible for tempting the thief to break into his house. My judgement is just and is based on scriptural injunctions.” The king was aghast and was unable to reply. He only told the monk “From this moment I relieve you of this post of a Judge. You are free to go about my kingdom and propagate the Dhamma.”

It is told in Srimad Bhagavatam that one should accumulate only that much riches as is sufficient to cater for his livelihood. Anybody who accumulates more is a thief and he should certainly be punished.