

The Monk who sold his Advice.

By Li Hong Chong.

Once there lived a monk who used to sell advice for a considerable amount of money. His customers were not many, for no one wanted to spend money for his exhortations, no matter whether they were of any worth or not. But the monk was persistent. Wherever he went, he used to advertise for his pieces of advice. A youth of a rich family sent for him, saying, "Sir, it is out of curiosity that I am willing to purchase your advice, otherwise I have no need of it." The monk felt offended and left the rich youth and went to advertise in another street. The youth, however, followed him and urged him to sell him his advice for the fixed amount he demanded. Thereupon he charged him two hundred rupees, and advised him, "Look twice before speaking or taking any action."

The youth felt uneasy for paying such a big amount for such a simple

counsel. Anyhow, what was done could not be undone.

He went home utterly distressed and dejected for having made a very foolish bargain and wasted his money. Whoever heard of his folly, regarded him as a fool and a simpleton; and he became a laughing-stock of his companions.

Poor fellow, he himself began to entertain the same idea about himself. His sister at home was a woman of quarrelsome habits and a peevish temper. She taunted him for having a faithless wife who, she said, used to run away from his house every morning and nobody knew where and for what purpose she went away. This was too much for him, and he decided to kill his wife outright for her sin. But the costly advice of the monk came to his help. "See twice before taking any action."

These words, simple as they were, checked him from committing the ghastly deed which he had in mind.

He rose early in the morning, the next day, and saw that his wife, after having taken her bath, was about to repair to some place. He followed her. She did not know that she was being shadowed by her husband. She went direct to a temple and, prostrating herself before the idol of the Deity, requested Him to protect her from the slandering of her sister-in-law.

The youth came back after his wife had finished her prayer. The same thing took place the next day, and the following. Now he felt perfectly satisfied with her conduct and came to know that in reality she had a faultless and quiet demeanour. He began to love her and accused his sister of back-biting and blaming his wife. Since then he found no fault with the consort of his bosom and lived a happy life.

Time is ever a fleeing—and a flashing alliance, and it does not permit anybody either to catch or to overtake it. After a year the same monk visited his town again. The youth out of gratefulness went to pay him homage. He wanted to entertain him as a guest and present him a sum of Rs. 200/- more for his valuable advice.

Both the requests the monk refused, saying he could not accept more than he had charged him. It was the exact price of the article offered. Once taken, it cannot be refunded, and nothing further is required from the customers but to act accordingly. The youth related the story to the saint, and expressed his obligations to him for his kind admonitions.

The monk said, "I am glad to hear of how you acted. Bear in mind that from top to toe you are made up of pairs of opposites, and it is extremely necessary that these should act in concord. You have two lobes in your head, two parts in your forehead, two eyebrows, two eyes, two ears, two breasts, two thighs, two legs, and so forth. Study this problem carefully, and let them act in harmony. Two in One and One in two, that is the lesson imparted to you. You are nothing but an embodiment of pairs of opposites. See twice, hear twice, think twice before engaging yourself to any action. You are profited by my advice, and that is enough. Let it be the guiding principle of your life, get addicted to it, and you shall never mourn for the purchase you made."

Saying so, he left the youth, without asking anything further.

The Balanced Mind.

Content with whatsoever he obtaineth without effort, free from the pain of opposites, without envy, balanced in success and failure, though acting he is not bound.

(*Gītā* IV. 22)
