

How the Buddha Faced Abuse

as edited by
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In the ninth year of his ministry, the Buddha spent the rainy season at Kosombi.

It was in this year that *Māgandiyā*, the beautiful daughter of wealthy brahmin came to harbour a grudge against the Buddha and sought an opportunity to dishonour him.

Narada Maha Thera, in *The Buddha and His Teachings*, 1998, translates and narrates the story:

“*Māgandiyā* was a beautiful maiden. Her parents would not give her in marriage as the prospective suitors, in their opinion, were not worthy of their daughter.

“One day as the Buddha was surveying the world, he perceived the spiritual development of the parents. Out of compassion for them he visited the place where the father of the girl was tending the sacred fire. The brahmin, fascinated by his [the Buddha's] physical beauty, thought that the Buddha was the best person to whom he could give his daughter in marriage and requesting him to stay there until his arrival, hurried home to bring his daughter.

“The Buddha in the meantime stamped his footprint on that spot and moved to a different place. The brahmin and his wife, accompanied by their daughter, who was dressed in her best garments, came to that spot and observed the footprint. The wife who was conversant with signs said that it was not the footprint of an ordinary man but of a pure person who had eradicated all passions.

“The Brahmin ridiculed the idea, and, noticing the Buddha at a distance offered his daughter unto him.

“The Buddha describing how He overcame his passions said: --

*'Having seen Tanhā, Arati and Ragā,
(The three daughters of Māra)
I had no pleasure for the pleasures of love.'*

*'What is this body, filled with urine and dung?
I should not be willing to touch it, even with my foot.'*
Buddhist Legends, part i, p. 274.
(Narada 155)

“Hearing his Dhamma, the brahmin and his wife attained Anāgāmi, the third stage of Sainthood. But proud *Magandiyā* felt insulted and she thought to herself:—

'If this man has no need of me, it is perfectly proper for him to say so, but he declares me to be full of urine and dung. Very well, by virtue of birth, lineage, social position, wealth, and the charm of youth that I possess I shall obtain a husband who is my equal, and then I shall know what ought to be done to the monk *Gotama*.'

“Enraged by the words of the Buddha, she conceived a hatred towards him. Later she was given as a consort to the King of Udena. Taking advantage of her position as one of the Royal consorts, she bribed people and instigated them to revile and drive the Buddha out of the city.

“When the Buddha entered the city, they shouted at him, saying:

'You are a thief, a simpleton, a fool, a camel, an ox, an ass, a denizen of hell, a beast. You have no hope of salvation. A state of punishment is all that you can look forward to.'

“Venerable *Ānanda*, unable to hear this filthy abuse, approached the Buddha and said - 'Lord, these citizens are reviling and abusing us. Let us go elsewhere.'

'Where shall we go, *Ānanda*?' asked the Buddha.

'To some other city, Lord,' said *Ānanda*.

'If men revile us there, where shall we go then?' inquired the Buddha.

'To still another city, Lord,' said *Ānanda*.

'*Ānanda*, one should not speak thus. Where a difficulty arises, right there should it be settled. Only under those circumstances is it permissible to go elsewhere. But who are reviling you, *Ānanda*?' questioned the Buddha. (Narada 156)

'Lord, everyone is reviling us, slaves and all,' replied *Ānanda*.

“Admonishing Venerable *Ānanda* to practise patience, the Buddha said:

'As an elephant in the battle-field withstands the arrows shot from a bow, even so will I endure abuse. Verily, most people are undisciplined.'

'They lead the trained horses or elephants to an assembly. The King

mounts the trained animal. The best among men are the disciplined who endure abuse.'

'Excellent are trained mules, so are thorough-bred horses of Sindh and noble tusked elephants; but the man who is disciplined surpasses them all.'

“Again he addressed Venerable *Ānanda* and said” –

'Be not disturbed. These men will revile you only for seven days, and, on the eighth day they will become silent. A difficulty encountered by the Buddhas lasts no longer than seven days.'

(Narada 157)

Conclusion:

The Buddha felt good-will towards the brahmin and his family but had reached the point of purity at which he no longer had physical desires, so he was not attracted to youth and physical beauty of the maiden, the way an average everyday common man would be.

The Buddha says that having withstood the temptation of the three daughters of Mara, he has no desire for that kind of sensual pleasure and finds the body, indeed, to be full of impurities.

Māgandiyā, being still young, does not understand the Buddha's refusal and her pride is injured. She wants revenge and uses her influence to get the multitude to heap abuse up on the Buddha.

Venerable *Ānanda* wants to run away from the abuse to protect the Buddha from this harmfulness, but the Buddha, knowing better, explains that he is well-disciplined and can endure abuse like an

elephant well-trained for battle.

He says that trained animals are excellent, but a well-disciplined man can behave better on an even higher level. Such a well-disciplined man can withstand a barrage of abuse when he knows he does not deserve it

Based upon his higher knowledge, he is aware that: --

'A difficulty encountered by the Buddhas lasts no longer than seven days.'

In conclusion,

we may be reminded of what the Buddha said
about practicing equanimity,
about standing above praise and blame,
about standing above good and evil, and
how the taste of the Dhamma is always the same.

Reference

Narada Maha Thera. 1998. *The Buddha and His Teachings*.
Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation.