

A liar is akin to an Empty Vessel

by

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“*Subhāsītā ca yā vācā*” – “Well-spoken speech” is the ethical and moral principle that the Buddha, the Enlightened One, has given humanity for vocal behaviour. As is mentioned in the *Maṅgala Sutta*, well-spoken speech is one of highest blessings that one could have. According to the teachings of the Buddha, well-spoken speech has four characteristics, namely, speaking politely and not impolitely (*subhāsitaṃyeva bhāsati no dubbhāsitaṃ*); speaking righteously and not unrighteously (*dhammaṃyeva bhāsati no adhammaṃ*); speaking pleasantly and not unpleasantly (*piyaṃyeva bhāsati no appiyaṃ*); and speaking truthfully and not untruthfully (*saccaṃyeva bhāsati no alikaṃ*). These characteristics or factors are commended as faultless and praiseworthy by knowledgeable people (*anavajjā ca ananuvajjā ca viññūnan*). Truth is said to be deathless or immortal (*saccaṃ ve amatā vācā*).

Once the Buddha when staying in Veḷuvana near the city of Rājagaha, decided to see the little monk Rāhula who was staying at Ambalaṭṭhikā. On that occasion the Buddha gave advice to little Rahula regarding the importance of always being truthful. The Buddha used many similes to make him understand the dangers of telling lies.

Rahula was yet very young and playful. When venerable Rahula saw the Buddha approaching he made a seat ready and placed some water to wash the Buddha’s feet. The Buddha left a little water in the water vessel and asked venerable Rahula: “Rahula, do you see this little water left in the water vessel?” –

“Yes, Venerable Sir”. – “Even so, Rahula, of little value is the life of one who is not ashamed to tell a deliberate lie.”

Then the Buddha threw away the little water that was left and asked venerable Rahula: “Rahula, do you see that water that was thrown away?”-“Yes, Venerable Sir”. - “Even so, Rahula, those who are not ashamed to tell a deliberate lie have thrown away their purposeful life”.

Then the Buddha turned the water vessel upside down and asked the venerable Rahula: “Rahula, do you see this water vessel turned upside down.” – “Yes, Venerable Sir.” – “Even so, Rahula, those who are ashamed to tell a deliberate lie have turned their lives upside down and empty”.

The Buddha then endearingly spoke thus to little Rahula: “Even so Rahula: when someone is not ashamed to tell a deliberate lie, there is no bad deed that one could not do. So Rahula, you should firmly resolve thus: ‘I will not tell a lie, even for fun’. this is how you must train yourself, Rāhula”.

There is a four-line verse found in *Sirith Maldama* that echoes in my mind. It is simple but has a deep meaning.

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Lying is always ugly
 It cannot be likened even to a carcass of a rat snake.
 Truth is beautiful
 It is even better than kingly happiness in this world.

We should mindfully train ourselves to adhere to the Buddha's good advice, which is **'I will not speak a lie, even for fun'**. This is good for yourself. This is good for others. This is good for both yourself and others. Remember always that abstaining from telling lies will be beneficial to you both in this life and the lives to come.

Refs.:

Mangala Sutta, Khuddhaka Nikāya, Sutta Nipāta, Cūla Vagga, Sutta 4;
Subhāsita Sutta, Khuddhaka Nikāya, Sutta Nipāta, Mahā Vagga, Sutta 3;
Ambalaṭṭhikarāhulovāda Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya. Sutta 61.



**STOP
WAITING FOR THE
PERFECT TIME
TO GET ORGANIZED.
TAKE THIS MOMENT
AND
MAKE SOME PROGRESS.**