

Chapter 7 of 'The Monkey King'

Adopted from the classic Chinese tale

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Good Books Unbound

Monkey transforms himself

STORY SO FAR:

Monkey learned some powers and tricks from Master Subhodi, but it went to his head. The sage warns him that the Three Calamities will soon catch up with him.

When the Monkey King heard Master Subhodi say the Three Calamities would cause his death, he jumped up and bowed his head to the ground before the master.

"Master," Monkey cried, "have mercy on me. Teach me how to ward off the Three Calamities and become a true immortal."

Master Subhodi studied him. "Monkey, there is no limit to knowledge. If you want to stay here as my student, you must obey the rules. If you don't, you will be dismissed. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Master," Monkey said anxiously. "But Master, do you think I can truly learn the necessary secrets? It sounds very hard."

"Monkey, nothing in the world is too difficult, but our thoughts make it seem so. All you have to do is work hard at it."

"Master, from this moment forward I promise to be good. And I'll work and study as hard as possible." By way of showing that he meant it, Monkey did a triple somersault.

True to his word, Monkey worked and studied hard from that day on. He recited spells, memorized formulas, and listened to his master's lessons.

Five years passed. Over that time, Monkey became the master's most advanced student. Even Master Subhodi was beginning to think Monkey could successfully battle the Three Calamities.

One summer afternoon, when all the students were practicing their lessons in front of the cave, Monkey became bored. He strolled about, looking at what the other students were doing.

He stopped in front of one student and laughed. "Ha! Do you call that a transformation? Your lower body has changed into a crocodile, but look at your top. I suspect that's who you truly are. A donkey."

"It's easy to make fun, Monkey," said another student. "But what about you? What kind of transformation can you do?"

"I can change myself into anything I want," Monkey replied. "Do you want me to show you?"

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"No, don't!" another student cried. "Master Subhodi warned us never to use our special powers without a good reason."

"But I have a good reason," Monkey King said. "It's to show you that I am smarter than all of you. Now then, watch this!"

Monkey leaped into a clear spot. Reciting a magic formula, he shook himself. At once he vanished in a cloud of pink smoke. When the smoke cleared, there stood a beautiful peach tree with large and luscious peaches hanging from its branches.

"Bravo, Monkey," the students cried, breaking into loud applause and laughter. "You are wonderful!"

At that moment, Master Subhodi came out of the cave and walked through the crowd of students. He did not say a word. As soon as the students saw him, they grew quiet and sat down.

Monkey, however, had not noticed. Still a peach tree, he said, "Of course I am wonderful. Oh, Master taught me the magic formula. But if I weren't so smart, the formula would have been useless. I'm the one who makes it work."

"I think," said Master

Subhodi, "that this peach tree knows almost everything except the rules."

His voice was soft, but it sounded like thunder to Monkey. Quickly, Monkey transformed back to himself and bowed low before the master.

"Master, please forgive me!" he cried.

"Ah, my brilliant student. I see you have forgotten your promise."

"It was only a joke, Master," pleaded Monkey. "I won't punish you," sighed the master. "But you cannot stay here any longer."

Monkey burst into tears. "Master, I promise I'll never disobey again."

"It's too late," said Master Subhodi with a firm shake of his head. "Although you have learned much, you are far from the path of enlightenment. I cannot have students who just want to show off. It's too dangerous. And disrespectful."

"But what about the Three Calamities?" Monkey cried. "I haven't finished my studies."

"That is your own fault, Monkey," said the sage. "You must leave immediately. I urge you to use the powers you have learned for good causes."

Otherwise you will be in a lot of trouble." Then Master Subhodi turned and walked away.

Monkey started to cry. All the same he bowed deeply toward his master's back three times. Then he said goodbye to the other students and walked away from the cave.

As he went, he wailed, "What will happen to me now?"

(To be continued next week...)

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CHAPTER 7

Activity Guide



Just the Facts

1. What did Master Subhodi tell Monkey he would have to do if he wanted to stay and learn?
2. What did Monkey do to be a good student?
3. What did the other students do when Master Subhodi saw that Monkey had changed himself into a peach tree?

Between the Lines

4. How did Monkey show that he meant to keep his word to Master Subhodi?
5. Monkey made fun of another student's transformation. What was the transformation?
6. What did Monkey want to learn before he had to leave Master Subhodi?

Let's Discuss

7. What do you think Master Subhodi meant when he said "nothing in the world is too difficult, but our thoughts make it seem so?"
8. Why did Master Subhodi say it was dangerous and disrespectful for Monkey to disobey rules?
9. Make a prediction: Where will Monkey go, now that he has to leave the school?

In the Real World

If you could transform yourself into anything, what would it be? Look in the newspaper for a person, animal, or object you would like to be if you could transform yourself. Explain your choice.

Competition

Hey kids!!! Send in your answers to the Activity Guide for each chapter and win great prizes, with the compliments of Vijitha Yapa Bookshops. The best entry each week will be awarded a book voucher for Rs. 1,000.

These weekly entries will also be eligible for lots of exciting prizes at 'The Monkey King' Grand Competition at the end of the serial story. (See page 9 for details)

VOCABULARY

- Bravo**, Monkey (exclamation) "hurray, well done"
- disrespectful**, (adjective) not showing respect
- formula**, (noun) a set of words used in a ritual
- knowledge**, (n) information you understand and can use
- luscious** peaches, (adj) very appealing
- mercy**, (n) kindness, undeserved understanding
- strolled**, (verb) walked in a casual way
- reciting**, (v) repeating from memory



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