

Stories from

The Buddha's Life

With Dharma Discussions for Kids

*From *The Life of the Buddha* by Bhikkhu Ñānamoli
and original sources*

*Adapted for kids and illustrated by
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Photos of young monks at Sri Sudhammananda Bhikkhu Training Center, Haloluwa, Kandy, Sri Lanka, courtesy of Venerable Huruluwewe Chandrawansa Thero, Chief Incumbent, Pennsylvania Meditation Center, International Buddhist Society of Pennsylvania.

Photo of lotus by Eric Wang on Unsplash.

We take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha



*May you be well, happy and peaceful!
May all beings be well, happy and peaceful!*



INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is a revision of the book entitled *Morals in the Life Story of the Buddha*, published by Buddhist Publication Society in 2010. This revision expands the stories to follow more completely the original sources of the stories and updates the dharma discussions to address concerns and challenges that students have been facing in recent years. Also, Pali words have been replaced with English for better comprehension by the reader.

The format of this book, with a Dharma discussion on a theme from each story, is designed to introduce children to ethics (character development) and basic Buddhist concepts, and to gently guide them in identifying and applying those ethics and concepts in everyday modern life with all its challenges. The goal is to assist children in developing their good character, virtues, confidence, resilience, awareness and good habits so they have a firm foundation for a successful, happy and peaceful life. The Dharma discussion is a suggested outline for discussion, to be modified to suit the students' ages and backgrounds. It should invite students to pose their own questions, concerns and hypotheticals, and to share ideas, examples and solutions from their own experiences. The question and answer (with answers shown in parentheses) are to aid comprehension and recollection of the story. The quotation of the Buddha is included as an overarching guide for teachers and parents. The activity is intended to reinforce the lesson and engage students in practicing and contemplating what was learned. Teachers and parents should start each session with prayer or chanting and conclude with a dedication of merit.

I am very grateful to Khenpo Samdup Rinpoche and Bhante Huruluwewe Chandrawansa Thero and for their guidance, inspiration and support for teaching children at their temples in the past several years. I thank all my students over the past years for their questions, comments and responses to the stories and discussions which have helped immeasurably in editing this book. I thank my co-teachers, Aleks Smirnov and Fawn Bui, for all their thoughtful suggestions for revisions. I am also very grateful to Dr. Sharmini and Don Jayamaha for generously sponsoring the printing of this book.

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Chapter 1 – Birth of Prince Siddhartha

About 2600 years ago, in a town called Kapilavasthu at the base of the Himalayan mountains in a place now located in Nepal, lived the Sakya clan, ruled by King Suddhōdana. He had two wives, Queen Mahamaya and her younger sister, Māhapajāpati Gotami.

One night, Queen Mahamaya dreamed that she was carried by four heavenly beings to the Himalaya Mountains, where she bathed in a lake, dressed in heavenly clothes and was adorned with flowers. She lay on a couch, with a silver mountain nearby. A white elephant appeared, holding in its trunk a white flower. He raised his trunk and trumpeted loudly, walked around the Queen's couch three times, and then disappeared inside her. While she was having that dream, the Bodhisattva – which means a great being who will become a Buddha - came from a heaven-world called Tusita, or the Heaven of the Contented, and became Queen Mahamaya's child. When she awoke, she told the king about the dream.

She felt especially happy and healthy from that time on. Ten months later, she traveled with some friends to her parents' home to give birth, as she knew the baby soon would be born. She was carried on a palanquin, which is a covered seat held up by two long poles on the shoulders of four men. On the way, as they approached Lumbini Park, where there was a garden, the queen wanted to stop and relax. She walked to a huge Sala tree and reached out for a branch to hold onto for support. As she stood there, she gave birth to the Bodhisattva.

Four deities immediately held the new baby and presented him to the queen, saying, "Rejoice, O Queen, a son of great power has been born to you!"

The newborn Bodhisattva was no ordinary baby. He stood firmly on the ground on his tiny legs. And he walked – he took seven steps toward the north, and at each step, a lotus flower appeared under his foot. With a white umbrella held over him, he looked in the four directions and said,

"I am the highest in the world, I am the best in the world, I am the foremost in the world. This is the last birth, there will be no future lives for me."

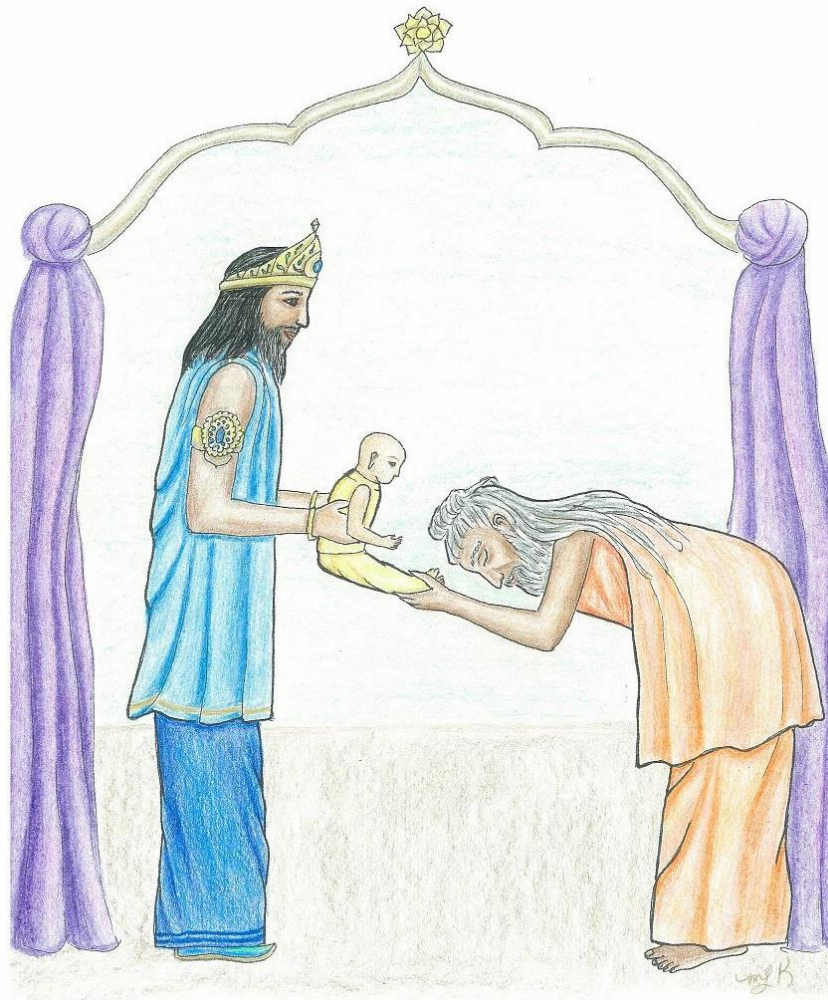
A powerful light went through the whole universe, including the heaven-worlds and even the darkest areas of the universe.

The new mother and baby, along with their traveling companions, returned to the palace.

The news of the baby prince - the son of King Suddhōdana and Queen Mahamaya - traveled throughout the kingdom and beyond. In the Himalaya mountains, a wise holy man named Asita, deep in meditation, could see that the gods of a heaven-world called Tavatimsa, the Heaven of the 33 Gods, were full of joy. When he asked them what was the reason for their great joy, they said that a being who will be enlightened has been born to the Sakyan people in the land of Lumbini.

Asita, who was a teacher and advisor to King Suddhōdana, went to visit the king, knowing it must be his baby son who has been born. When Asita arrived at the palace, he sat down and immediately asked, “Where is the boy? Show him to me.”

Queen Mahamaya presented the baby prince to Asita, who saw immediately that the baby was pure and brilliant. He felt deep joy looking at the little child. The queen held the baby with his head bowed toward the holy man, according to the custom of everyone - including kings and queens – to bow to holy men. It is common in many Asian countries, in ancient as well as modern times, to bow to the feet of a person for whom one has very great respect.



But surprisingly, the baby prince turned his feet toward Asita!

Then the king held the baby with his head toward Asita, but again the prince turned his feet toward Asita. The king directed the baby’s head toward Asita two more times, but the baby did the same thing each time.

Asita told the King not to stop the baby from turning, but to allow him to bow to the baby’s feet.

And the old, wise holy man bowed to the tiny baby. This was appropriate, because, as Asita noticed, the baby prince had certain signs of the greatest of holy beings, including long arms, long thin fingers, golden color skin, long thick eyelashes, a

circle of white hair between his eyebrows, large heels, and the shape of a wheel on his feet. Glowing with great happiness, Asita said, “Among the human race, he is unique.”

Then Asita remembered his own age, and tears ran down his cheeks. He looked very sad. The royal family became very worried seeing the holy man’s tears, and asked, “Is there some danger to the prince?”

Asita replied, "As I foresee, no harm will touch the boy, nor is there any danger that awaits him. But he is not an ordinary person. He will reach the ultimate true knowledge. With purity and compassion for many, he will set the Dharma Wheel turning and spread his life of holiness, teaching the Dharma. But very little of my life remains, and I shall die before that, so I will not hear this great hero teaching the good Dharma. That saddens me; that loss distresses me."

A few days later, the king invited some astrologers to the palace. They could predict the prince's future by calculating from the position of the planets at the time of his birth.

They predicted that if the prince has a family, then he will be the most powerful king, the king of the world, but if he chooses not to have a family and instead to be a holy man, then he will become the most holy being, the Enlightened One, and will teach truth to the world.

The baby prince was named Siddhartha, and the name of his family was Gautama.

When Prince Siddhartha was seven days old, his mother Queen Mahamaya died and went to Tusita heaven-world, the Heaven of the Contented. From that time, her sister Māhapajāpati Gotami took care of him as a mother.

Questions:

1. What does "Bodhisattva" mean? (a great being who will become a Buddha)
2. What did the baby prince do as soon as he was born? (he stood and walked, taking seven steps to the north, and said that he was the highest and best in the world, that this was his last birth, and that he would have no more lives)
3. What did Asita do when the baby prince turned his feet toward Asita? (bowed to the baby prince)
4. Why was Asita so happy seeing the baby? (the prince was a great holy being who would be a great teacher of the Dharma)
5. Why did Asita feel sad? (he would die before the prince would teach the Dharma)
6. What did the astrologers predict about the baby's future? (if he had a family, he would be the most powerful king but if he decided to be a holy man, he would be the Enlightened One and teach truth to the world)

What the Buddha said:

“Pūjārahe pūjayato, Buddhhe yadi va sāvake, papañcha samatikkante, tiṇṇa sokapariddave. Te tādise pūjayato, nibbute akutobhaye, nasakkā puññam sankhātum, imettam iti kena ci.”

“He who reveres the worthy ones, the Buddhas and their disciples, who have overcome all challenges and unhappiness, he who reveres such peaceful and fearless ones has more merit than can be measured.”

Dhammapada 195-196 (14:17-18)

Dharma Discussion - Respect:

When you see someone bow to another person, what do you think?

For some of us, we don't see people bowing very often; we see musicians, dancers and actors do a little bow thanking the audience after finishing a performance.

For others of us, especially in Asian cultures, it is quite normal to see people bowing to monks, nuns, and others who are dedicated to a holy life.

Bowing is a way of showing great respect.

What do we mean by “having respect” for a person?

What kinds of thoughts and feelings might you have toward the person when you have respect for them? Admiration, gratitude, and appreciation.

For example, when you bow to your audience after you perform, you are showing appreciation and gratitude to the audience for coming to the performance and applauding.

Bowing to a monk means that we respect the monk as if he is the Buddha, because, like the Buddha, he teaches us the Dharma – what the Buddha taught.

The Dharma is the best guidance on how to live a peaceful and happy life.

When we bow to a monk, a nun, or a Buddha statue, we are admiring the Buddha's good qualities - like his compassion and wisdom - and feeling thankful that he gave us the Dharma, so we can learn to have a peaceful, happy life .

This is how we respect the Buddha.

We hear the word “respect” also in other contexts, in many different situations.

Can you think of some situations where you must show respect?

We must respect our parents and teachers, respect the rules, respect other people's opinions, have respect for other people's belongings, and have respect for others' personal space.

What does it mean, to “have respect” in these situations?

Caring about others, not wanting to disturb others, being kind.

It also means being considerate of others, being polite, and following the rules.

Sometimes we see other people being disrespectful, not having respect for others.

They shout, say unkind words, refuse to follow rules, or act rudely or selfishly.

They complain or argue loudly without a good reason, or insist on doing whatever they want to do while ignoring the needs of others.

How do you feel when you see others being disrespectful? Many of us feel uncomfortable or uneasy, especially when adults are disrespectful.

Why are they disrespectful? Maybe they haven't learned to be polite and respectful. Or they're feeling stressed or angry. Or they're just having a bad day.

Sometimes, we might forget to have respect.

We tend to forget to have respect for others when we are feeling irritable, upset, angry, uncomfortable or stressed.

We are so focused on our own discomfort that we don't notice others so much.

When we're feeling this way, we have to make an extra effort to be aware of others and to be respectful to them.

We know how to have basic respect. For example, what do you do when someone greets you, saying "hi" or "good morning"? What do you say when someone gives you something? What do you do when you have made a mess?

Sometimes classmates or others around us are not behaving respectfully, not being polite and kind. We might feel tempted to "fit in" with their behavior.

When that happens, remember that it shows that you are strong, with self-confidence and courage, when you are a good example to others rather than just being a "follower," falling to the lower level of behavior that others have.

Going to a Buddhist temple is a good way to practice respect.

What are some ways that we show respect at a temple?

We remove our shoes before we go in.

We don't run around, shout, or behave in ways that annoy others.

We put our palms together when we greet a monk or nun, and when we look Buddha statues and other religious statues; maybe we bow to them.

Sometimes we make offerings such as flowers, food, incense, candles or lamps.

We handle Dharma books and offerings very carefully, not dropping them, stepping on them, or putting them on the floor.

We patiently stand in line to receive food. We clean up after ourselves.

We look for ways we can help and offer to help when we see an opportunity.

We are kind, friendly and welcoming to others.

This helps the temple maintain a peaceful atmosphere that everyone can enjoy.

When everyone is respectful to each other, then everyone feels comfortable, peaceful and happy.

Activity - Word Search - Find and circle 10 words from the story:

R	A	M	F	E	E	T	K	L	U	N
A	D	A	S	I	T	A	I	P	N	E
B	N	H	J	W	R	A	L	H	I	P
H	S	A	K	Y	A	P	K	L	B	A
L	U	M	B	I	N	I	O	R	O	L
O	W	A	G	Y	S	D	A	L	W	Y
T	P	Y	S	R	A	Q	U	E	S	A
U	D	A	V	H	L	Y	O	T	E	L
S	I	D	D	H	A	R	T	H	A	P

(Lotus, Lumbini, Mahamaya, Siddhartha, Asita, Sakya, feet, Sala, Nepal, bow)

Chapter 2 – Prince Siddhartha’s Childhood

King Suddhōdana, remembering the astrologers’ prediction that Siddhartha would be either a king of the world or an enlightened holy man, wanted to be sure that when he became old, his son would rule the kingdom. Therefore, he was determined to make his son become a great king rather than a holy man. He gave his son wonderful luxuries and entertainment so that he would love the royal lifestyle and want to be a king in the future.

So, the young Prince Siddhartha had the best of everything. He had the best food, the best expensive clothing, and three palaces of his own - one to stay in during winter, one for summer, and one for the rainy season. During the rainy season, when he mostly stayed inside, he was entertained by talented musicians, singers and dancers.

Three ponds were made for him, one with blue lilies, one with white lilies and one with red lilies. There were 32 ladies to take care of the young prince, and someone always held a white umbrella over him to protect him from heat, cold wind, drizzle and dust. He enjoyed playing with his cousins and friends in his palaces and in the surrounding gardens and ponds.

One day, when Prince Siddhartha was a very young boy, King Suddhōdana brought him, along with some of the ladies who were his caretakers, to a plowing festival. There the farmers with their best, strongest oxen participated in a competition to plow a field, in which the oxen pulled heavy plows that cut into the soil, loosening it so the field could be planted with seeds for food.

The king went to observe up close the farmers plowing the fields with their oxen, and the ladies stayed with the young prince. They spread a soft rug on the ground for little Siddhartha to sit on.

After a while, they decided to go closer and join the crowd to see the events at the festival for just a few moments. They didn’t want the precious little prince to be crowded by all the people, so they left him peacefully sitting on the rug.

As he sat there, Prince Siddhartha watched the farmers plowing the fields. It was a hot day, and the men were working very hard to make the oxen walk as fast as possible as they pulled the heavy plow behind them, and to guide the plow in a straight line. The farmers were sweating in the hot sun, their faces tense with the effort. He saw the oxen straining their muscles to pull the plows faster through the hard soil. They all looked so uncomfortable and stressed!

Then he noticed birds catching worms and insects in their beaks and eating them. The poor worms and insects were killed and gobbled up by the hungry birds.



Prince Siddhartha not only saw, but he also deeply felt, the suffering - the discomfort and misery - of the men, the oxen, the worms and the insects. Understanding their suffering and wishing he could relieve them of their suffering, he felt great compassion for them.

He went to sit in the shade under a rose-apple tree, and as he sat cross legged, very still with his eyes closed, he began to meditate. He had not been taught to meditate, had never seen anyone meditating, and had never even heard of meditation. But his mind became very calm, still, focused and clear. As he meditated, he felt a very deep peace and happiness.

Meanwhile, his caretakers were enjoying the festival so much that they didn't go back to check on little Siddhartha until quite a bit of time had passed. They had forgotten about their precious little prince! When they suddenly remembered him, they rushed back to where they had left him. Prince Siddhartha wasn't there!

They found him sitting under the rose-apple tree nearby. They and King Suddhōdana saw the little prince meditating. Seeing his son meditating, the king was very concerned, remembering what the astrologers had said, that if he does not choose to have a family life, he will be an enlightened holy man. The king was even more determined to give little Siddhartha everything he could and to train him to be a great king.

When Prince Siddhartha was eight years old, he became the student of the best and wisest teacher in the kingdom. He learned math, science, languages, history, geography, archery, and wrestling. He was also taught about military techniques and war, which was necessary for a future king. Siddhartha was a very intelligent student, and was very strong, respectful and kind to all. Although he already had read many books before he started school and had a lot of knowledge for a young boy, he was humble and didn't show off to the other students.

Questions:

1. Why was Prince Siddhartha given the best of everything? (his father wanted him to enjoy the royal lifestyle so he will become a king)
2. What did Prince Siddhartha see that was similar about the farmers, oxen, worms and insects? (they were suffering)
3. What did he feel when he saw the men, the oxen and the insects? (compassion)
4. What did he do after he felt compassion? (he meditated)
5. Had he been taught to meditate? (no)
6. Why was the king concerned when he saw his son meditating? (he wanted his son to be a king and not a holy man)

What the Buddha said:

“Sabbe sattā, sabbe pānā, sabbe bhūtā ca kevalā, sabbe bhadrāni passantu, mā kiñci pāpam āgamā.”

“May all beings, all breathing things, all who have taken birth,
May all have what is good; may none of them suffer from evil.”

Khandhaparitta

Dharma Discussion – Compassion:

Prince Siddhartha hadn't seen anyone really suffering at home in the palace with his family and the employees and servants.

But at the festival, he saw real suffering - the men and oxen sweating as they worked so hard in the hot sun, and the worms and insects being eaten by the birds.

We often talk about suffering in Buddhism. What do we mean by suffering?

In Buddhism, suffering means any kind of unpleasantness – for example, unhappiness, pain, discomfort, worry, stress, disappointment, loss, fear, grief, embarrassment, loneliness, feeling left out, ignored, jealous, frustrated, or guilty.

Everyone feels at least some unpleasantness, some suffering, every day.

How do you feel when you see someone who is suffering, for example, someone in pain or someone who is crying?

We might be curious and wonder what happened, or who hurt them.

We might feel sympathy – feeling sorry for them.

Or we might care more than that. We might feel empathy – sadness and real concern for them
Or, caring even more, we may feel compassion, which means we understand their suffering and
really want to help them; we wish to do something to relieve their suffering.
Compassion means that we truly care about them and want them to feel better.
Compassion is a feeling of kindness and love in response to others' suffering.

Compassion is one of the most important teachings of the Buddha.
Why is it so important? It takes our minds away from our self to care about others.
The more we care about others, the more we feel connected to others.
Also, the more we care about others, the less selfish and egoistic we become.
We become more kind, more helpful, and more loving, and less agitated by our own worries,
fears, and desires.

Can you remember a time when you felt compassion?
Maybe you felt compassion for a family member, friend, pet, or other animal when you saw
then in pain or distress.
Did you try to help them feel better? Did you ask what you can do to help?
Often, there isn't much we can do to help. For example, little Siddhartha couldn't help the
farmers, oxen, insects or worms.
But we can wish that they feel better, perhaps while chanting or saying a prayer.

The Buddha encourages us to have compassion for all beings.
That means to have compassion even for people we don't like, people who hurt others, people
who do terrible things.
Why? Because they need help to learn to be kind.
And because they will suffer the painful results of each and every bad action they do, according
to the law of karma.
Karma means cause and effect: for each good act that you do, you get a good, pleasant result,
and for each bad act that you do, you get a bad, unpleasant result.
The result doesn't happen immediately, but at some time in the future, maybe in a future life.
When we have compassion for someone, we wish they learn to be kind and then not have to
suffer so much.
When we think like this, then we don't hate them; instead, we hate what they do, we hate their
behavior, but wish that they become a better person.
So, compassion helps us overcome hatred.

Sometimes, when we're not feeling good about ourselves, it's difficult to feel compassion for
others. We need relief from our own suffering, we're trying to relieve our own pain, so we
don't think about helping others.
But if we think about the suffering of others, and especially if we make efforts to help relieve
the suffering of others, we forget about our own suffering for at least a little while.
For example, if you are feeling miserable about something, and you see someone who is upset
and you talk kindly to them, then you both feel better.

Activity – Matching;

Draw a line from the word in the left column to the correct description in the right column:

humble	predicted that Siddhartha would be a king or enlightened
meditation	to understand someone's suffering and wish to relieve it
luxuries	the king, Prince Siddhartha's father
rose apple tree	not arrogant, not showing off
compassion	discomfort, disappointment, unhappiness, stress
suffering	to calm and focus the mind
Suddhōdana	where Siddhartha was found meditating
astrologers	good actions give good results, bad actions give bad results
karma	what the king gave Siddhartha

Chapter 3 – Devadatta and the Swan

Prince Siddhartha was extremely kind and compassionate to all. He never hurt others, and he always wanted to make others happy, including all the servants and other people who worked for him and his family. He was always ready to help both human and animal beings. He even loved snakes and other animals that other people didn't care about.

He often played in the park with his friends and his cousin, Devadatta. One day, Prince Siddhartha was walking in the woods with Devadatta, who had brought his bow and arrows with him. Devadatta saw a swan flying and immediately he put an arrow in his bow and shot at it. The boys saw the swan drop from the sky.

Both boys ran toward the swan. Prince Siddhartha could run very fast and found the swan first. He was surprised and glad to see that it was still alive! But it was injured and in great pain. He very gently removed the arrow from the swan's wing, caressing the swan tenderly. He looked around and quickly found some leaves that he knew were good for healing wounds. He squeezed out some juice from the leaves onto the wound, to stop the bleeding.

Just then Devadatta rushed up to Siddhartha and angrily demanded,

“Give me my bird! I shot it.”

Prince Siddhartha replied, “No, I'm not going to give it to you. If you had killed it, then it would be yours. But it was wounded and alive, and I saved it, so it's mine.”

Devadatta shouted, “You stole my bird! It's mine! Give it to me!”

His face looked full of rage. He was very angry that Siddhartha was keeping the swan away from him. He was proud to be a hunter, killing animals with his bow and arrows. In his mind, his cousin was stealing the bird that he expertly shot.

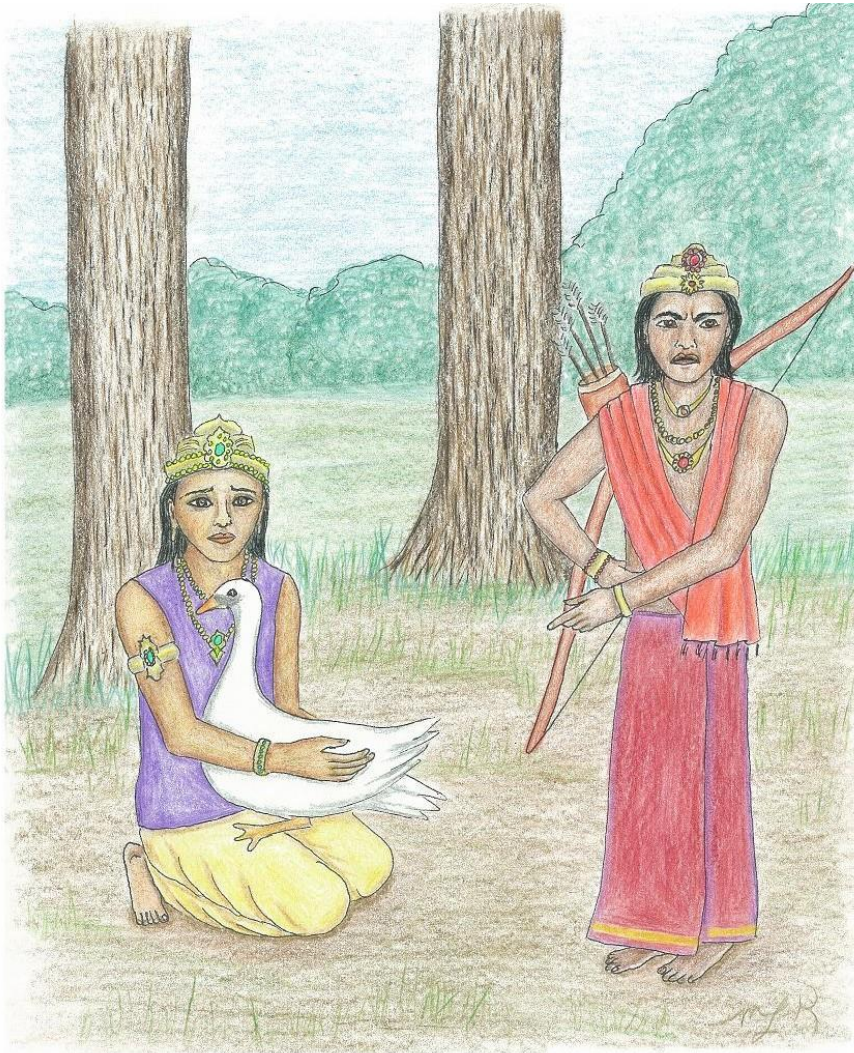
Prince Siddhartha would never let an animal suffer or allow it to be killed. His compassion for the swan was powerful, and he was determined to protect it no matter what.

Devadatta wanted to grab the bird, insisting repeatedly, “Let go! Let go of the bird!”

Prince Siddhartha couldn't bear the thought of giving the bird to his cousin, who would not save its life but would surely let it die. He shielded the swan with his body, cuddling it to his chest so Devadatta couldn't get it. The prince knew how stubborn, uncaring and angry Devadatta was - he would argue, shout and fight until he got his way, insisting he was correct and others were wrong. So, Prince Siddhartha said,

“Let's go to the scholars and ask who really owns it.”

The scholars were wise men who had studied for many years and who advised his father, King Suddhōdana, on many occasions. They knew social and spiritual laws and rules and often made determinations of fairness to help solve disputes in the kingdom.



Devadatta agreed, confident that the scholars would agree with him that a wild animal belongs to the person who shoots it. He knew that all hunters everywhere live by that rule, so how could anyone disagree?

They went to the scholars and each boy explained what happened and his point of view of the situation. The scholars discussed it and said,

“A life must belong to him who tries to save it. A life cannot belong to one trying to destroy it. So, the swan belongs to Prince Siddhartha.”

Devadatta was stunned and furious. He began to hate his cousin.

Prince Siddhartha took care of the swan until it was healed. Then he released it so it could live in freedom as a wild swan.

“The bird is now free, and doesn’t belong to anyone,” he thought, as the bird flew high into the air.

Questions:

1. How was Devadatta related to Prince Siddhartha? (Prince Siddhartha’s cousin)
2. What did Devadatta want to do when he saw the swan? (shoot it and kill it)

3. How did Devadatta feel when Prince Siddhartha wouldn't let him have the swan? (angry)
4. How would Devadatta behave in an argument? (He was very stubborn, uncaring and angry, and would argue, shout and fight until he got his way)
5. How did Prince Siddhartha and Devadatta settle the argument? (they went to the scholars)
6. What was the scholars' reason for saying the swan belongs to Prince Siddhartha? (the swan was alive and a life belongs to one who saves it, not to one who tries to destroy it)

What the Buddha said:

“Na tena ariyo hoti, yena pāṇāni himsati; ahimsa sabbapāṇānam, ariyō ti pavuccati.”

“He is not noble who injures living beings. He is called noble because he is harmless to all living beings.”

Dhammapada 270 (19:15)

Dharma Discussion – Arguments:

Prince Siddhartha and his cousin Devadatta had a disagreement over the swan.

So they argued, like we all often do when we have a disagreement.

But they had a different style of arguing. How did Devadatta argue?

Devadatta just insisted on having his way, saying “it’s mine,” “give it to me,” and “let go.”

His only reasoning was “I shot it,” and he accused Prince Siddhartha of stealing from him.

And he used anger and shouting to try to overpower Prince Siddhartha.

Devadatta used words showing only selfish interest, thinking only of himself: “it’s mine,” “give it to me.”

Often, a person who argues like that doesn't have a good reason for arguing – he just wants something for himself.

How did Prince Siddhartha argue?

He explained his point of view clearly, he tried to persuade Devadatta why he thought he was correct, and he was firm in his position.

This is a better, more mature style of arguing.

He didn't just shout back, “no, it's mine!”

What do you think might have happened if he only shouted back at Devadatta?

Devadatta would have shouted louder, would have been even more forceful and angry, and maybe would have tried to grab the swan out of his cousin's hands.

It probably would have led to violence and more anger.

Why? Because of Devadatta's character. How would you describe his character, his personality? Angry, uncaring, stubborn, impatient, demanding.

Devadatta didn't listen; he didn't patiently argue his point of view.

Prince Siddhartha knew it was no use continuing to argue; he needed to get help from adults to resolve the dispute and save the swan.

We have all experienced this - when the person arguing with us is very angry and won't listen or reason with us, we might need to ask an adult to help.

But should we argue over every disagreement? Should we ask an adult to help us resolve every argument we can't resolve ourselves?

No. Sometimes, it's just not that important.

For example, what if Prince Siddhartha and his cousin were arguing over a pen, do you think Prince Siddhartha would seek help from the scholars to resolve the disagreement?

He probably would have thought it's too unimportant to ask the scholars for help. It would interrupt them from what they were doing and would take up their time for something that is so trivial. He had compassion for others, so he may not want to want to do that. And he wasn't selfish or possessive of things.

He might let Devadatta have the pen, or at least let him borrow it for a while.

When we have a disagreement, sometimes it isn't worth shouting and getting upset. If our argument becomes loud, it disturbs others around us.

Remember to have compassion for those around us – not only for our parents and other people, but also for pets. No one wants to hear loud quarrelling!

Also, if the argument leads to anger and hurt feelings, we may lose our friendship with the person we're arguing with.

On the other hand, some people are very confrontational by nature – they argue and quarrel over all kinds of things and won't stop until they win. Engaging in arguments with them is a waste of time and energy, and doesn't end well.

In all those kinds of situations, if we can't easily come to an agreement, we can just leave or let the other person have what they want.

Can you think of any other people we should avoid arguing with?

Parents and teachers. Usually, they are trying to guide us with love and good intentions, and arguing with them is very often a mistake.

For example, when we argue to avoid doing something that we should do, or when we try to force a parent to give us something we want, we probably don't have any good reason to argue.

In some situations, it's very important to argue.

Why did Prince Siddhartha think it was important to argue with Devadatta?

Because a living being – the swan - would be harmed or killed if he didn't argue to defend it. So, when a person or other living being may get hurt, we should do what we can to defend them, to save them from being harmed. This is an act of compassion.

Also, if you may be harmed or abused if you don't argue in your defense, you have a good reason to argue and defend yourself.

There are other situations where it is important to argue – when we need to speak up for what is right, to defend ourselves or others from wrongdoing or harm.

Activity:

In each of the following scenarios, should you argue or keep quiet? Under what conditions is it wrong to argue? Under what conditions is it okay to argue?

1. Your little sister wants to play with your toy. Should you argue and prevent her from playing with it?
2. Your little brother is eating cookies and you ask him to stop eating so many, but he doesn't stop. Should you argue and prevent him from eating them?
3. A student says something insulting to another student. Should you argue with him or her?
4. Your sister drops food on the floor, you point it out, but she doesn't clean it. Should you argue?
5. You and your brother are watching TV and he turns it to another channel. You ask him to put it back, and he refuses. Should you insist that he turn it back to the other channel?
6. You are standing in line at school and a student cuts in front of you. Should you argue?
7. Your brother borrows your clean bike and returns it full of mud, and you ask him to clean it but he refuses, saying that he didn't make it muddy. Should you argue and insist that he clean it?

Suggested Answers:

1. No if you just want to play with the toy or you don't like her to have it. Yes if the toy is dangerous for her or you think she may break it.
2. No if you just want to eat or save the cookies for yourself. Yes if you think it's not healthy for him to eat so many.
3. If you think the student was hurt by the insult, you can say something like "that wasn't nice." It might be appropriate to tell an adult.
4. You can point out the food on the floor again, but if she still doesn't clean it, arguing probably won't make her do it.

5. Yes if the other channel is violent. If it's not violent, try to make an agreement to watch a show you both like, or watch a show that you like for some time and a show he likes for an equal time.
6. If you are last in line and you think the person didn't notice you, you can politely say "I'm in line also." If others are in line behind you, they may be unhappy if you allow him to cut in line, so you can kindly say "excuse me, they are all waiting also." If he ignores you, arguing probably won't help.
7. No, it probably won't help anyone to argue. You can decide not to allow him to borrow it again, or discuss it with your parents.

Chapter 4 – The Four Sights

Prince Siddhartha grew up with everything a boy could want in those times in his royal family's palaces in the city of Kapilavatthu. When he was 16 years old, his father, King Suddhōdana, met with his council and they discussed Prince Siddhartha's future as a king, to govern the Sakya people. The council members suggested that the young prince get married. The king wondered which young lady would be the best one - the right one - to be his son's bride, and to be the future queen. Each council member wanted his own daughter to be married to the kind prince who had such excellent character, and who in addition would be the future king. The king wondered whether any of those daughters would be a suitable queen and wife for his son.

The king went to his son and asked him what type of bride he would accept. Prince Siddhartha replied,

“She must not be an ordinary girl, but she must have no envy, and she must be truthful, careful, not proud of her beauty, generous, content, religious, pure in mind and speech and respectful to all.”

How would a girl with all of those qualities be found? It would be best for the prince himself to choose among many young women from the noble families all around the kingdom. The king sent messengers to announce the search for a bride for his son, and they invited all of the daughters of the neighboring kings and noblemen to his palace for a party to meet the prince.

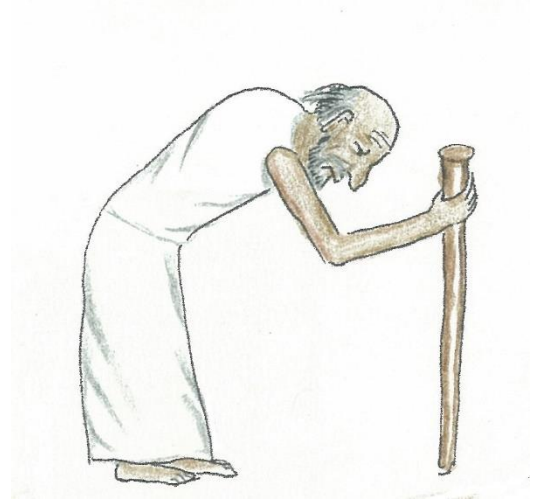
On that day, the young ladies came to the palace dressed beautifully, with great hopes that they would be the one chosen by the handsome prince. During the party, Prince Siddhartha presented a gift to each young lady. The last one to approach the prince to receive a gift was his cousin, Princess Yashodhara. But after all of the other young ladies had received a gift from Prince Siddhartha, there were no gifts left to give to Princess Yashodhara. So, he gave her one of his own pieces of jewelry that he was wearing.

The prince saw that Princess Yashodhara had all the qualities that he had told his father he was looking for. He decided that she would be his bride.

Not long thereafter, they were married in a beautiful palace ceremony. Prince Siddhartha then lived happily with his wife, Yashodhara. They enjoyed all the pleasures of palace life, being served with the best food, riding around the palace grounds, with its gardens and parks, and being entertained by many musicians, dancers and singers.

They stayed within the palaces and the surrounding palace grounds. They had everything they wanted, so there was no reason to travel around. For the prince's entire life, the king had not allowed the prince outside the palace grounds, to protect him from seeing any pain or suffering that might urge him to become a holy man rather than a king, as the astrologers had forecasted soon after he was born.

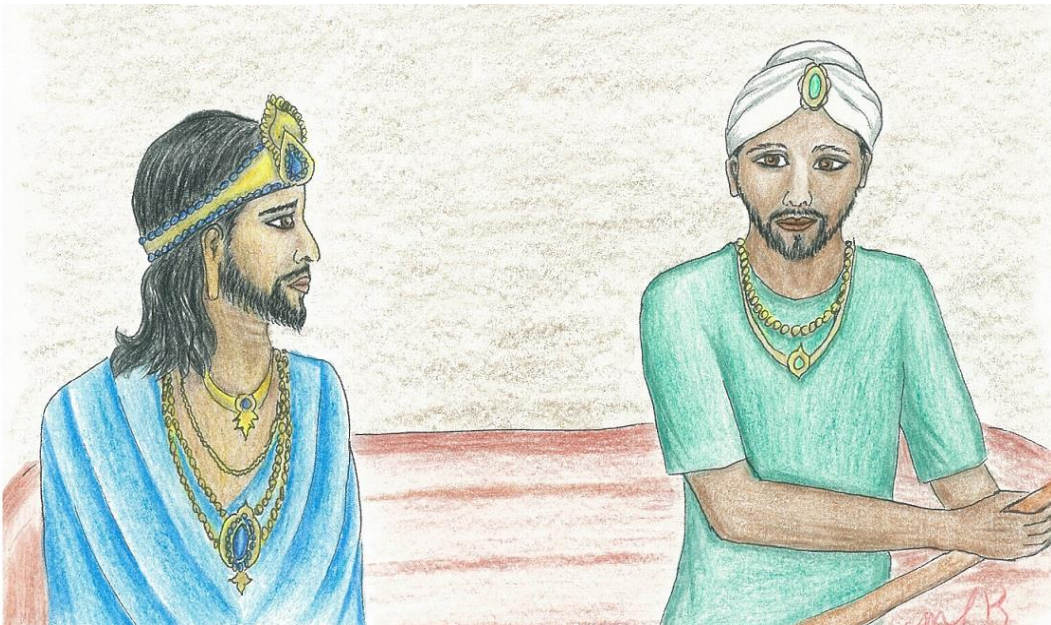
But Prince Siddhartha was to be the future king, so he had to meet the citizens of the kingdom. One day when he was 29 years old, after many years of living happily in his palaces with Princess Yashodhara, he asked Channa, his chief servant and driver of his horse-drawn chariot, to drive him outside the palace grounds and into the kingdom's capital city, Kapilavatthu.



During the journey, people all along the road joyfully welcomed the prince. But there was one person who caught the prince's full attention. An old man was walking along the road, bent over, shaking, holding on to a large stick for support. Prince Siddhartha had never seen any person bent over and shaking. He had never seen someone who was old. No one at his family's palaces looked like that. It seemed like something was terribly wrong with him.

He asked, "What is wrong with that man? Where are his teeth? What's wrong with his eyes? And why is his hair so white and his face full of wrinkles?"

Channa replied, "He is very old."



The prince asked, "what is the meaning of 'old'?"

Channa said, "He will not live long."

The prince asked, "Will I become old like that?"

Channa said, "You and I and all people get old if they live a long time."

The prince was shocked and troubled, full of sorrow and distress, thinking about the suffering of old age. He had never seen such suffering before. He said,

“Enough of this journey. Let’s go back home.”

He thought, “Ordinary people are shocked and disgusted seeing another person who is old, but he forgets that he will get old. I too will get old, I am not safe from aging, so I shouldn’t be shocked and disgusted to see an old person.”

He thought deeply about the old man he had seen, and about himself and everyone he knew becoming old, their body aging, and becoming weak and unpleasant to look at. He wished he could help people escape the suffering of old age.



On another day, Prince Siddhartha went again to the city of Kapilavatthu with Channa. Along the road they saw a man wailing in pain, trembling and thin, breathing loudly.

Channa said, “Let’s get away from here.”

Prince Siddhartha asked, “Who is he? Why should we get away?”

Channa replied, “He is a sick man. It is painful to be sick. Anyone can get sick at any time and suffer with sickness.”

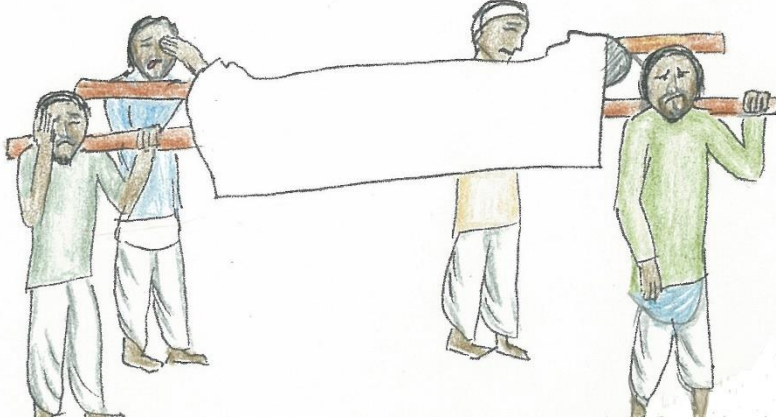
The prince asked, “Could I get sick? Can my family get sick?”

Channa said, “Yes, no one knows when they will get sick.”

The prince was shocked and distressed, thinking about the sick man and the suffering of being sick. He had never seen such suffering before. He thought,

“Ordinary people are shocked and disgusted seeing another person who is sick, but he forgets that he will get sick. I too will get sick, I am not safe from sickness, so I shouldn’t be shocked and disgusted to see another person who is sick.”

He thought deeply about illness, how terrible it is, and that there must be a way to avoid it. He wished he could find a way to relieve people of the suffering of illness.



On another day, Prince Siddhartha went with Channa to the city, and they saw a body being carried on a stretcher, with people crying around the body.

The prince questioned Channa, "What is this? Why are those people crying? Is the man sleeping on the stretcher?"

Channa answered, "The body is a dead man."

The prince asked, "What is the meaning of 'dead'?"

Channa said, "A dead person cannot walk or even move, and they cannot feel anything. The body will be cremated, burned to ashes."

The prince asked, "Will I die? Will my father die? Will all the people I know die?"

Channa said, "All living beings die. We cannot avoid it. No one can live forever."

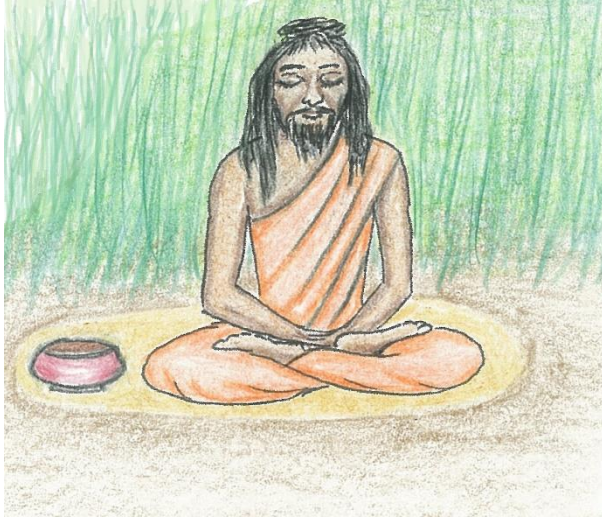
The prince was shocked and distressed, thinking about the dead man and the fact that everyone will die. He had never seen the sadness and suffering that people feel from the death of a loved one. On returning to the palace, the prince thought,

"Ordinary people are shocked and disgusted seeing another person who is dead, but he forgets that he will die. I too will die, I am not safe from dying, so I shouldn't be shocked and disgusted to see another person who is dead."

He also thought, "No one has found a way to avoid death, but there must be a way to escape it. I must find a way."

On yet another day, Prince Siddhartha went with Channa to the city, and they saw a man with a bowl who was wearing just a plain orange cloth. His face looked very serene, deeply peaceful. The prince asked Channa,

"Who is this man? Why does he look so peaceful?"



Channa explained, “He is an ascetic, a person who has given up family life to live without a home and other comforts, to seek liberation, freedom.”

Prince Siddhartha was fascinated by the ascetic. He wanted to know more about ascetics. When he returned to the palace, he sat for long periods of time deep in thought about the four sights he had seen - the old man, the sick man, the dead man and the ascetic. He thought,

“If I must experience birth, aging, illness, death, sadness and impurity, why should I want those who also must experience these things? Seeing the danger in these things, suppose I seek after that which is not born, doesn’t get old, doesn’t get sick, doesn’t die, and has no sadness or impurity – freedom from suffering, liberation from worldly life, Nirvana?”

King Suddhōdana observed his son deep in thought and worried that he might be dissatisfied with the royal palace life and want to leave it to become a holy man. The king therefore ordered more entertainment for the prince, and ordered his guards to watch him.

But the prince did not enjoy the pleasures at the palace anymore - the singers, dancers and musicians. He wanted to be an ascetic like the one he saw.

Questions:

1. What type of lady did Prince Siddhartha want as his bride, the most beautiful one in the country? (no, he wanted a lady who was not jealous, truthful, generous, respectful to all, not proud of her beauty, and pure in mind and speech)
2. What did Prince Siddhartha see during the first ride to the park with Channa? (an old man)
3. What did he see during the second ride and the third rides to the park? (a sick man and a dead man)
4. Why was he shocked and distressed when he saw these three sights? (he had never seen such suffering before)
5. Why did the king order more entertainment for his son, and guards to watch him? (so he would not want to leave the royal palace life to be a holy man)
6. What is an ascetic? (a person who has given up family life to live without a home and other comforts, to seek liberation, freedom)

What the Buddha said:

“Dukkhānupatitaddhagū”

“A person who is in samsara (continuing cycle of birth, death and rebirth) experiences suffering.”

Dhammapada 302 (21:13)

Dharma Discussion - Suffering:

When Prince Siddhartha saw the old man, the sick man, the dead man and the sad, grieving people around the dead man, he was distressed because he had never seen suffering before. He also was distressed because he had great compassion for them. He felt sad and wanted to relieve their pain.

In Buddhism, we talk a lot about compassion. What is compassion? Understanding others' suffering and wishing to help relieve their suffering. The Buddha taught us to develop compassion. But we can't develop compassion unless there are others for whom we can feel compassion, to whom we can show our compassion. And we can only feel compassion if they are suffering in some way. So, we must understand something about suffering.

What does suffering mean, exactly?

In Buddhism, suffering means any kind of discomfort or dissatisfaction, ranging from slight discomfort or worry to extreme pain, fear, grief, or distress.

Can you think of some examples of suffering that we all feel sometimes?

We suffer every day, whenever we are hot, cold, thirsty, hungry, or tired.

We suffer whenever we feel disappointed, frustrated, lonely, worried, embarrassed, stressed, bored, or ignored.

At some points in our lives, we suffer when we are very ill or injured, when we suffer some type of failure, when we lose a loved one or lose something precious, when we are blamed, or when others don't like us.

Does everyone suffer?

Do you think some people are always happy and don't experience real suffering? Many students, movie stars, sports stars, and other people we see seem to have a life full of pleasures and fun. We don't see them unhappy, crying or in pain.

Many people don't like others to know that they are unhappy or distressed, so they don't show their unpleasant feelings.

And many people experience years of an easy life without many big difficulties.

But everyone experiences some suffering every day.

No matter how wealthy, famous, intelligent or popular a person is, he or she experiences the same kinds of suffering that we experience.

Animals suffer too. How? They get hungry, thirsty, ill, injured, afraid of being attacked, exhausted,
Suffering is part of life; we can't totally escape it while we are living on earth.
Whenever we feel some pleasure or happiness, we always feel some pain, unpleasantness or unhappiness later. And whenever we feel pain, unpleasantness or unhappiness, we always feel some pleasure or happiness later.
Suffering and pleasure always come and go.
So, our pleasure comes only between two pains. No pain, no gain!

But Prince Siddhartha had a feeling that there could be an end to suffering.
He saw that the ascetic had a very peaceful face although he had no wealth, family or home to keep him happy.
Yet the prince's family didn't look as peaceful although they had everything to keep them comfortable, entertained and happy.
The prince realized that they must be suffering in some ways that the ascetic was not suffering.
And the prince wanted to find out how!
He wanted to find out how all suffering could end: how a person could end their suffering, how they could stop the cycle of getting old, sick and dying, then being reborn into a new body and again getting old, sick and dying, over and over again.
He felt such great compassion for all beings that he wanted to help them find a way to end their suffering.
He couldn't feel happy and satisfied knowing that others are suffering.

Activity:

Bean bag toss: Students sit in a circle, and try to think of several situations which cause suffering in their lives (for example, getting a bad grade, broken toy, not being invited to a party, being bullied, making your team lose, disagreement with a friend, boredom, too much homework).

As the teacher or parent tosses the bean bag toward a student, he/she calls out a situation which causes suffering. The student catching the bean bag must immediately toss the bean bag to another student while calling out a different situation which causes suffering. Students continue the bean bag toss while calling out a situation which causes suffering. If a student pauses more than three seconds with the bean bag, calls out a type of suffering after throwing it, or repeats one which someone else already called, he is "out" and is no longer in the game. The last one in the game wins.

Chapter 5 – Leaving Home

Prince Siddhartha very often thought about the ascetic that he saw, the man who was a renunciant, a person who has renounced - given up - family life and home to live a spiritual life of meditation. His face was so calm and peaceful that he seemed to have no worries at all, although he had no home, belongings or family. Prince Siddhartha thought,

“House life is like living in a crowded dusty atmosphere. The life of a renunciant is like living in wide open fresh air. It is not easy, living in a household, to lead a holy life as perfect and pure as a polished shell. Suppose I shave off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and leave the household life to live as a renunciant?”

King Suddhōdana noticed that his son lately seemed deep in thought and uninterested in the entertainment at the palace, and he worried that his son may decide to abandon the royal life and become a holy man. King Suddhōdana was anxious for his son to become the next king, so he ordered the very best musicians and dancers in the land to entertain in his royal palaces, hoping that would distract the prince from his deep thoughts.

The king also thought that the prince soon would be more focused on family life because the prince’s wife, Yashodhara, was going to have a baby. One day, when the prince was away from the palace, he heard the news that his son was born. Instead of being overjoyed as most fathers would feel, he thought to himself,

“An eclipse has arisen. Another bond to the world is created which is an obstacle to my renunciation, giving up the household life.”

An eclipse is a darkness that covers up the light of the sun or moon. He meant that the birth of the baby was an obstacle because it was an attachment of love that would bond or tie him to the life of a family man, which would make it more difficult for him to leave household life to become a renunciant.

Later, he named his baby son Rahula, which means “little eclipse.”

As Prince Siddhartha was returning to the palace, he passed the mansion of Princess Kisagotami, who was standing out on her balcony. When she saw the kind and handsome prince, she felt joy and admiration for him. Thinking that his family must feel great joy to be with him, she said aloud,

“His mother, father and wife must be nibuddha.”

Nibuddha means very peaceful. As the prince heard her say this, he thought, “Nibuddha is such a wonderful word. I am looking for nibuddha, which is not selfish happiness but true peace.

Today I must give up my householder life. Princess Kisagotami inspired me with the word 'nibuddha,' so I'll give her a gift."

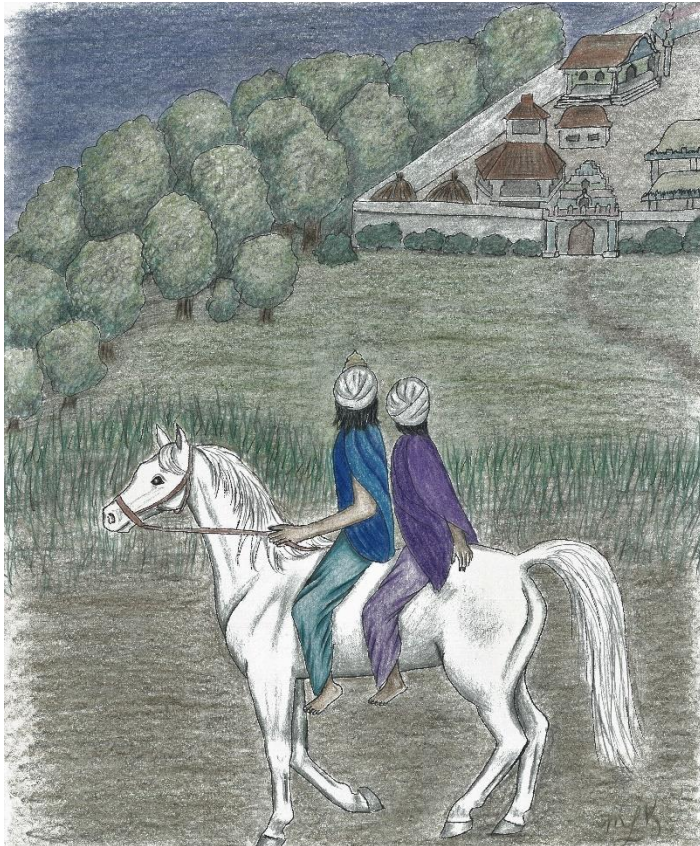
He gave her some jewelry as a gift, which made her feel very happy.

When he arrived at the palace, the finest dancers and musicians were there to entertain him. To please his father, he watched them late into the night, until he fell asleep. Then, one by one, everyone started falling asleep.

Prince Siddhartha woke up in the middle of the night. He saw the dancers and musicians asleep. Just a few hours ago, they had looked absolutely beautiful, smiling and dancing joyfully and gracefully in colorful clothes, with perfectly groomed hair. Now, what a shock! They looked totally different - messy and frightening. Some of them had their mouths open, some had saliva dripping from their lips, some were snoring, and some were grinding their teeth like demons. The dancers who had looked so beautiful now looked so disgusting!

He got up and told Channa to secretly prepare his favorite white horse, Kanthaka, for a journey.

Then he silently walked into the bedroom to see his newborn son. Yashodhara and the baby Rahula were sleeping so peacefully. Yashodhara had the baby cradled in her arms, holding him



close to her, and her arm was covering the baby's face. Prince Siddhartha wanted to see his son's face, but he thought, "If I move her arm, she will awaken, and then my concentration will be ruined - I won't have the determination to leave her and become a renunciant. But I will find enlightenment, and then I will come back to them."

That night, at the age of 29, he left the palace, riding his horse along with Channa. As he rode away, he looked back at his home city, Kapilavatthu, and thought,

"I will not return until I have found the way to put an end to old age, sickness and death!"

When he got to the deep Anoma River, the powerful horse Kanthaka jumped over the river. The prince got off the horse and told Channa,

“Please take my jewelry and the horse and go back to the palace. I will become a renunciant. Tell my parents and Yashodhara not to worry, that I have gone to find a way to put an end old age, sickness and death.”

Channa said, “Please let me go with you!”

The prince said, “No. When I have found the way to enlightenment, I will return. Then everyone will be happy.”

With his sword, he cut his hair. As soon as each small bunch of hair was cut, it curled around to the right in a circle and stayed that way. That is why many statues and paintings of the Buddha show his hair as small knobs or curls all over his head.

Channa bowed to Prince Siddhartha, and started to ride back to Kapilavatthu. But as the prince disappeared into the distance, Kanthaka’s heart broke with love for the prince, and he died. Channa cried with sorrow not only for the horse but especially because he deeply missed his dear friend Prince Siddhartha, not knowing if or when he would ever return.

The prince saw that his beautiful clothes were not appropriate for a renunciant. He couldn’t wander around in rough jungles and remote forests in fancy silk clothes, which would quickly become ragged and ruined. A great heavenly being named Ghatikara, who lived in a heaven-world of very powerful gods called brahmas, knew that Prince Siddhartha would become a renunciant, so he brought him the eight necessities for a monk: three robes, a bowl, a razor, a needle, a belt, and a water strainer. The razor was for shaving his head and beard, the needle was to repair his robes, and the water strainer was to strain out any tiny living beings floating in water from streams and rivers that he would use for drinking water.

No longer a prince, Siddhartha accepted the gifts from Ghatikara, put on the monks’ robes, left his silk clothes behind, and went to meditate in the forest.

Questions:

1. Why did Prince Siddhartha feel that his baby son was an obstacle? (the baby would be an attachment of love that bonds him to family life that would make it more difficult to leave the household life to be a renunciant)
2. What did Princess Kisagotami say that inspired him? (nibuddha, peaceful)
3. What did Prince Siddhartha think of the dancers when they were asleep? (they looked frightening, disgusting)
4. Why did Prince Siddhartha leave the palace? (to find a way to put an end to old age, sickness and death and find enlightenment)

5. Why did he not see his son's face before he left the palace? (Yashodhara's arm covered his face, and if Prince Siddhartha would move her arm, she would wake up and it would be very difficult for him to leave)

6. How did Siddhartha get monks' robes to wear? (a powerful god - a brahma - gave him the 8 necessities of a monk, including three robes).

What the Buddha said:

“Asevanā ca bālānaṃ, paṇḍitānaṃ ca sevanā, pujā ca pūjanīyanaṃ, etaṃ mangalamuttamaṃ.”
“Not to follow or associate with the ignorant, associating with the wise, honoring those who deserve honor, this is the best way.”

Mahamangala Sutta

Dharma Discussion – Influence of others:

Prince Siddhartha suddenly left his wife and son – and his whole family - without telling them. They had no idea if or when he would ever return.

Usually, if a man runs away from his family, what do people think? It's terrible – he's neglecting them.

But Prince Siddhartha was not leaving like an ordinary man.

He knew his destiny from the time he was born. What did he know about his life when he took his first steps just after he was born? That this was his last life.

That means he would be enlightened - he would find the way to end suffering.

And then he could share his knowledge with his family and others so they could end their suffering too.

But he wouldn't be able to do that if he simply stayed home and became the king.

He would be too busy with responsibilities; his family and the people of the kingdom would expect him to take care of them.

So he had to leave to be able to help his family and kingdom in the best way – to guide them to the way to end all their suffering by enlightenment.

Also, he knew Yashodhara was well supported at the palace even without him; plus, she was not an ordinary woman; she was very pure-minded and would eventually understand the importance of what he was doing.

Yet it was very difficult for him to leave; he wanted to see his baby son, but knew that if his wife woke up, he would feel the strong attachment to her and not leave

Why couldn't Prince Siddhartha, being the king, direct others to do the work so he could do whatever he wanted to do?

Because others would influence him - expect him to spend time helping them, solving their problems, making decisions, doing what they want him to do.

What does “influence” mean? Others hint or suggest what they want, what is important, what you should do, what you should focus on.

Are there people who influence you? Who?

Your parents, brothers and sisters, friends, teachers, coaches.

Do they influence you in a good way? Hopefully, they suggest what is good for you; they encourage you to do what is good, kind, and helpful to you and others.

Does anyone influence you in a negative way?

Do you have a friend who sometimes does something, or suggests doing something, that you think is wrong?

Even if the friend doesn’t suggest that you do something wrong, we can be influenced by their behavior and their way of talking, just by being with them.

Can you think of some examples?

If they talk badly about someone, then we start to think that person is bad.

If they are a bit disrespectful toward a teacher, for example ignoring the teacher when she is talking to them, then it may seem to us to be okay to do that.

If they are sometimes arrogant or uncaring toward others, it may seem to us to be “normal” to behave that way.

If they start acting silly, we may join in with the silliness.

If they use rude words, we might begin using those words too.

Have you ever seen others being influenced like that?

We might not think we’re being influenced by others, but it happens much more than we think.

Bad behavior very easily spreads to others – it’s contagious.

We can see this happening with adults: when one speaks rudely, then some others start speaking rudely too.

We don’t want to be influenced in negative ways; if our behavior goes down to a lower level, then we will regret it later.

What can we do to avoid negative influences?

Be aware when a friend does or says something that doesn’t seem good, that isn’t the way your parents raised you. For example, notice if a friend is disrespectful or unkind toward another person.

Let that awareness be your signal to be a leader, not a follower.

Why are you a leader? Because you know what’s good, what leads to happiness - you know something about the Dharma.

Do you want to be a follower of those who don’t know or don’t care? No.

Don’t be fooled into following their behavior just because they’re popular, successful, or fun to be with.

Instead, be a leader by doing what is right, or letting them know how you feel about their behavior.

How do you let them know? You can tell them that what they said wasn't nice, you can frown or turn your face away from them, or you can walk away.

What if your friend continues their negative behavior, or it gets worse?

You may have to leave your friend - maybe for just a while, or, maybe it just isn't worth being around them anymore if their behavior is unacceptable.

Remember, bad behavior is very contagious.

It's often difficult to leave a friend, but we can remember how the Buddha - even though it was very difficult - had to leave all his family and friends to avoid being influenced by them, and to do what was really the best for everyone.

Activity:

Make a poster: Copy the quotation, what the Buddha said (above), on paper with markers or colored pencils. Then decorate the quotation with various art materials. The poster can be hung on the wall or refrigerator as a reminder of this very important teaching.

Chapter 6 — Becoming a Renunciant

Siddhartha, having left the palace and his life as a prince, was now a renunciant, one who has given up the household life to live without family, home or wealth, to seek enlightenment, the end of suffering. And now had to find a way to get food to survive. Wearing monk's robes, he walked to the city of Rajagaha (also known as Rajagriha) in the morning.



He went up to some houses in the city and stood at the door silently, holding his bowl. Seeing his empty bowl, people understood what he needed, and offered him food by putting it in his bowl.

King Bimbisara, the king of the Magadha kingdom, looked out from his palace and saw Siddhartha walking in the city. He said to the people around him,

“Look, sirs, how handsome is that man, how noble, how pure and perfect is his conduct. With his eyes looking down and mindful, looking only a few feet

in front of him, he is not from any poor family. Send the royal messengers at once to follow the path that monk takes.”

Messengers from the palace were sent out to follow Siddhartha. They saw him wander from house to house. They noticed that he didn't look around, distracted by his surroundings and whatever made noise, as most people do. Instead, he seemed to be controlling his mind, being mindful only of where he was going, looking directly in front of him. They saw that as soon as his begging bowl was full, he walked away from the town to a nearby mountain where he sat alone in a cave on the mountain to eat.

He had received food from several families, so as Siddhartha looked in his bowl, he saw that different kinds of food were all jumbled together in the bowl. This looked strange and unpleasant to him. At his palace, he always had the best foods served to him neatly on plates. When he tasted the mixed-up food in his bowl, he didn't like it at all; it was repulsive to him. He felt sick and didn't want to continue eating it.

He thought, “I am a renunciant, which means I must eat the food that people offer me. Why am I so repulsed? What is the meaning of this repulsion?”

He thought about why he was disgusted with the food. The food was not stale; it was healthy, fresh food. He knew his disgust was only in his mind - his mind was disturbed and disgusted because he was attached to the food at his palace. As a renunciant, he had to get rid of his attachments – his desires, preferences and expectations. Once he understood that his attachments were disturbing his mind, he could eat the food with contentment.

The king’s messengers returned and told King Bimbisara, who decided to immediately meet personally with the noble looking man who was begging for food. He went out in his carriage and his driver quickly took him to the mountain. When they went up the mountain as far as the horses could go, the king got out of his carriage and walked up the mountain to where Siddhartha was sitting. The king greeted him and asked whether he was in good health and then said,

“You are quite young, a youth in the first phase of life. You have the good looks of a man from a noble warrior family, fit to lead the best army, to lead troops of elephants. I offer you a fortune of wealth; please take it. And tell me who your family is.”

Anyone would be thrilled with this extremely generous offer of wealth from a king!

Siddhartha, explaining where he was from, replied, “There is a wealthy country, sir, in the foothills of the Himalaya Mountains, where a people known as the Kosalans live, of the Sakya clan. But I have not left the household life to seek pleasures of the senses. Seeing the dangers in them, I left to get away from them, renouncing them. That is my heart’s desire.”

The king understood, and returned to his palace. Siddhartha went in search of a great master who could instruct him in meditation and teach him the way to end suffering, old age and death. He went to the famous teacher Alara Kalama, and said,

“Friend Kalama, I want to lead the holy life in Dharma and discipline.”

Alara Kalama said, “Venerable one, you may stay here. This teaching I give is such that that in a short time a wise man can realize through direct experience what his own teacher knows.”

Siddhartha learned his teachings. He asked Alara Kalama what he had experienced through direct knowledge with this teaching. Alara Kalama told him that the deepest level of meditation he attained was a direct experience of nothingness.

Siddhartha knew that he as well as his teacher had faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and understanding, which are necessary for meditation, so he was determined to practice the teachings to reach the same level as his teacher. When he meditated according to the teachings, after a while he had direct experience of nothingness.

He then asked Alara Kalama about the experience of nothingness, and said,

“I, too, friend, have reached this level, myself realizing it through direct knowledge.”

Alara Kalama said, “We are fortunate, friend, we are indeed fortunate, to have met each other to be friends in the holy life. The teaching that I have realized, you also have realized through direct knowledge. So you know the teaching that I know, I know the teaching that you know. We are the same. Come, friend, let us now lead this community of students together.”

The great master Alara Kalama had given his student Siddhartha the highest honor of inviting him as an equal or partner to teach his students. And Siddhartha could live comfortably as a highly respected teacher of many students together with this great master. This would be the dream of almost any renunciant!

But Siddhartha thought, “His teachings do not lead to detachment, purity, peace, enlightenment, Nirvana. It only leads to nothingness.” He wasn’t satisfied with that teaching. So, he left Alara Kalama to find another teacher who could help him to find the deepest peace.

He went to the very famous teacher Uddaka Ramaputra, and said to him, “Friend, I want to lead the holy life in the Dharma and discipline.”

Uddaka Ramaputra invited him to stay there and learn his system of meditation.

Siddhartha soon learned his teachings and then practiced them. In his meditation he had an experience that was deeper than nothingness, called neither perception nor non-perception. He then asked Uddaka Ramaputra about what he had experienced through direct knowledge with this teaching.

Siddhartha said, “I, too, friend, have reached this level, myself realizing it through direct knowledge.”

Uddaka Ramaputra was pleased that Siddhartha had mastered his teachings and realized the same deep level of meditation. So he invited Siddhartha to take over as the leader and teacher of his whole community of students.

This was the highest honor, even higher than teaching together with this famous meditation master. Almost any meditator would want to stay there and lead such an excellent group of students.

But Siddhartha realized that the technique he taught did not lead to detachment, purity, peace, enlightenment, Nirvana. It only led to the experience of neither perception nor non-perception. He was not satisfied with the teachings, so he left Uddaka Ramaputra’s community to find what leads to true purity and the deepest peace.

He wandered around the kingdom of Magadha and when he arrived at a place near Uruvela, he saw a beautiful forest by a river with clear water, near a village where the villagers might give him food. He thought it would be a good place to meditate, so he decided to stay there.

But he knew that living in the forest or jungle alone is not easy. Most people don't want to be alone in the wild. He thought, "A monk could go crazy if he has no ability to meditate, or if his mind is impure with greed, hatred, anger, desires for pleasure or fame, laziness, stress, arrogance, or fear." He knew that he didn't have those impurities, so he felt peaceful being alone in the forest.

But he dared himself to stay in places that other people might find frightening, and wondered if he would be scared. Sometimes a deer or peacock would make a noise nearby, and sometimes the wind would rustle the leaves. Was it a snake? A tiger? A leopard? A scorpion? Any of those could kill him.

When he heard those sounds, he started to think, "I am getting scared." But then he thought, "Why am I always expecting to get scared? Why not control my fear and just not react when fear starts to arise?"

So, if he was walking and fear started to arise, he just kept walking and didn't stop until he had calmed his mind of all fear. If he was standing, sitting or lying down when fear started to arise, he just stayed in the same position and didn't move until he calmed his mind of all fear. In that way, he didn't let fear take over his mind.

Questions:

1. Why didn't Siddhartha like the food the people put in his bowl? (it was mixed up, jumbled together in his bowl)
2. What was disturbing his mind, that made him think the food in his bowl was disgusting? (his attachment to the food at his palace)
3. What did King Bimbisara offer Siddhartha? (a fortune of wealth, money)
4. Was Siddhartha attached to wealth? (no)
5. Why did Siddhartha leave his teachers Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputra? (their teachings didn't lead to enlightenment)
6. How did Siddhartha control his fear when he heard noises in the forest? (he didn't react but kept doing whatever he was doing – walking, standing, sitting or lying down)

What the Buddha said:

“Ratiya jayati soko, ratiya jayati bhayam, ratiya vippamuttassa, natthi soko kuto bhayam?”
“From attachment comes grief, from attachment comes fear. For one who is wholly free from attachment, there is no grief; how can there be fear?”

Dhammapada 214 (16:6)

Dharma Discussion – Attachment:

When Siddhartha was given food that he didn't like, what did he do?

He didn't throw it away.

Rather than being spoiled by the food he had at his palace, he learned not to be choosy but to be content with eating whatever people put in his bowl.

He gave up his attachment to the tasty food at the palace that was served neatly on separate plates.

What other nice things did he have - that he was attached to - that he gave up?

He gave up his attachment to a comfortable life in the palace with his family.

He gave up attachments to everything he owned, including his horses.

He could have had an easy, pleasant life as a teacher of Alara Kalama's students or Uddaka Ramaputra's students. Many monks and renunciants would have become attached to living there as a well-respected, popular teacher.

But Siddhartha didn't get attached to it, and left to live alone in the jungle.

What do we mean by having “attachments” to something?

Wanting to have - and wanting to keep - the things, experiences, and activities that we like.

Do you have attachments? Of course. We all have many attachments – we are attached to our toys and things, our homes, our favorite foods, our favorite sports, hobbies and games.

Siddhartha, as a renunciant, had to give up his attachments so he doesn't get distracted by them, so he could stay focused on his goal, to find the way to enlightenment, the end of suffering.

We are not renunciants, so we don't have to give up our attachments.

But what happens if we have too many strong attachments?

If we're too attached to things, then we get very upset or angry when something unexpected happens – if something gets lost, broken, damaged, if we can't do our favorite activities.

And, if we're too attached to getting new things, then we're not content with what we have.

We always want something else, because we get bored with what we have.

We want something more, or something else, something that others have, or something better, bigger, or newer than what we have.

It's like an addiction - we are never satisfied for long. We get something nice, and then we want something else that goes with it, and another one, and then a newer one, and then something that our friend has, and so on.

So, what happens when we have too many strong attachments?

We are more often dissatisfied, disappointed, angry, unhappy, or stressed.

We are more peaceful when we're content with what we have, and when we are open to changes without too many expectations, without always insisting on what we want.

We can make our lives more peaceful by reducing our attachments.

Can you think of some ways to reduce attachments and be more content?

Remember that contentment with what you have leads to more happiness than having many attachments and always wanting more.

Remember to be open-minded rather than being too choosy, insisting on getting whatever you want, insisting on having too many things.

Remember that everything is impermanent and always changing, so we don't get too upset when things don't go exactly as you want them to go, when we lose something, or don't have it anymore.

Activities:

1. Make a list or a picture of all the people, things, and activities that you like the most – that you are most attached to. This helps us be aware of our attachments.
2. Or, with several people sitting in a circle, throw a ball or bean bag to another person as you call out something you are attached to – a person, object, activity, event, or place that you really like. The person who catches it calls out something he is attached to as he tosses the ball or beanbag to the next person. Keep going until every person has caught several tosses.

Chapter 7 – The Ascetic Life

Siddhartha knew that to become enlightened—which means having the ultimate knowledge, wisdom, and peace, with no more suffering—he would have to stay away from environments with distracting sights and sounds such as people talking, and the distractions of comfortable living conditions such as having many delicious foods and exciting things to do. These distractions would lead him to suffering like everyone else, constantly trying to find enjoyment and avoid pain. Staying alone in the forest was the way to avoid these distractions.

So he started living alone in the forest near Uruvela, a village to which he could walk and receive food donations from the villagers.

There were other people who also lived in the forest, away from distractions and comfortable living conditions, practicing meditation and other techniques to try to control the mind and become enlightened. They were called ascetics. Many of them tried to control the mind—to make it extremely strong and focused—by forcing it overcome discomfort and pain in their body. They believed that if their mind could tolerate pain and extreme discomfort—such as heat, cold, and hunger—without trying to escape it, then the mind could be brought completely under control.

Siddhartha was now called “the monk Gautama” because he lived like a monk or ascetic and his family name was Gautama. There was a group of five ascetics who knew about him, including one of the astrologers who came to see the baby Siddhartha and predicted that he would become the Fully Enlightened One who would teach the world how to become enlightened. The other four were sons of the other astrologers.

They wanted to find the monk Gautama so he could teach them how to become enlightened, so they wandered around, asking people in different towns and villages whether they had seen him.

Finally, they found him in the Uruvela forest. Hoping that if he achieved something special he would tell them, they stayed with him, serving him—for example by sweeping and cleaning the area he was staying, looking out for his safety, and bringing him hot or cold water.

To control his mind, Siddhartha tried clenching his teeth and forcing his mind to stop, sweating with the extreme effort. He became constantly mindful, fully aware of each moment, and full of energy in his body. But his body became agitated because his mind was exhausted by forcing control over itself. And the painful feelings of forcing his mind to stop didn’t give him the power to control his mind.

He tried to meditate while holding his breath to see if that would cause his mind to come totally under his control. But while holding his breath as long as he could, he heard a loud sound like wind roaring in his ears, felt terrible pain in his head and a burning feeling in his stomach. And such painful feelings didn’t help him gain any control over his mind.

He tried sleeping on a bed of nails to avoid feeling comfortable, and sleeping with his head resting on bones of dead bodies. He tried standing all the time, not allowing himself to sit or lay down. He tried letting his body be cold at night without making a fire to warm up. He tried not bathing over a long time, not even rubbing dust or dirt off his body.

He was not becoming enlightened with these techniques. He wondered whether he could control his mind by totally overcoming hunger, conquering his feeling of hunger. He thought, "Suppose I entirely stop eating?"

There were deities who knew what he was thinking, and didn't want him to starve. They came to him and said,

"Good sir, don't entirely cut off food. If you do so, we will inject divine food into your skin and you will live on that."

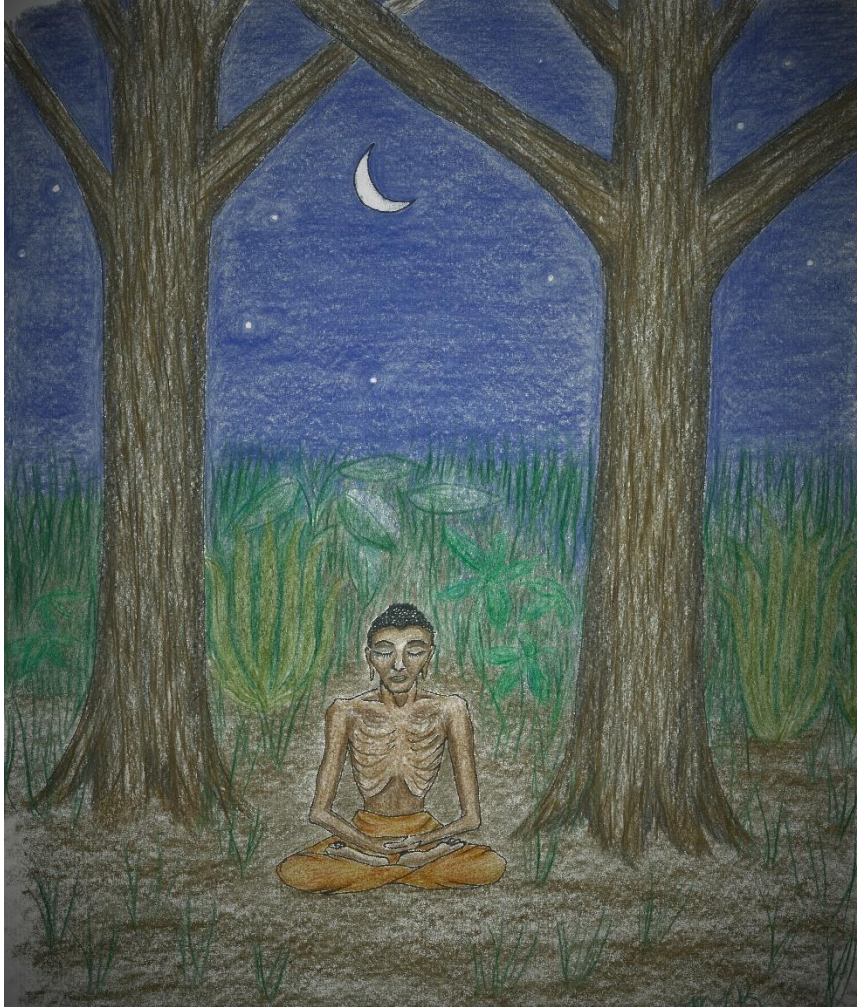
Siddhartha thought, "If I claim to be living without food, and these deities inject divine food into my skin, then I will be lying." So, he told them there is no need for them to do that.

However, he felt that eating food regularly from the villagers was too comfortable of a lifestyle and not helping him control his mind enough to attain enlightenment. He thought, "Suppose I take very little food, say a handful each time, whether it is bean soup or lentil soup or pea soup?"

So he ate only a handful of food whenever he went to the village, and then he went to the village only once every two days, then only once a week. He tried eating only a single grain of rice a day. But he didn't seem to be getting any closer to enlightenment. He wanted to make more effort and try even harder to attain enlightenment, so he stopped going to the village for food. He started eating only fruit which fell to the ground in the forest, and plant roots, moss, and grass.

After some time of eating so little, still he was not enlightened. He thought that searching for fruit was not helping him become enlightened. He then ate only the fruit that dropped from the tree that he was using as a shelter. Month after month, year after year, he became thinner and thinner with so little food.

The extreme starvation over several years made his body become extremely thin, emaciated, so even his muscles wasted away and he looked like a skeleton. His legs and arms were so thin they looked like bamboo sticks. His backbone stuck out from under his skin like beads on a string, and all his ribs could clearly be seen, protruding sharply through his thin skin. His eyes were no longer bright and beautiful but were sunken deeply into their sockets. When he touched his belly, he could feel his backbone. When he stood up, his body was so weak that he fell down on his face. When he massaged his legs and arms to ease his pain, the hair came off his body from eating so little food.



After six years of living as an ascetic in the forest, even his skin lost its golden-brown color and became dull due to lack of nourishment. When people looked at him, they couldn't tell what color he was; some thought he was a black man, others thought he was a brown man, and still others thought he had light colored skin.

Someone very powerful and evil was watching him: a demon called Mara. He did not want people to become enlightened, because then he and his demon armies would be weakened. Determined to prevent Siddhartha from becoming enlightened, Mara, speaking as if he felt

pity, said to Siddhartha:

"Oh you are thin and pale, near death. Live, sir! Life is the better way. Come, live the holy life, and make merit doing holy rituals. What can you do by struggling now? The path of struggling is too rough and difficult."

As he spoke, he came closer to Siddhartha.

Siddhartha replied calmly, "O Evil One, you came here to get what you want. I don't need merit now at all. Talk about merit to those who need it. I have confidence, energy, and understanding. I can control myself, so why do you speak to me about saving my own life? By controlling my mind, I shall have more mindfulness, wisdom, and greater concentration. My mind doesn't look for enjoyment, but it sees the purity of a being. Your demon armies are selfishness, craving, laziness, fear, doubt, hatred, stubbornness, seeking popularity, fame, and admiration even for wrongdoing; also, showing off and speaking badly of others. No one but the brave will conquer them. And by conquering them, happiness will result. I don't retreat from this battle; it's better that I die in battle against them now than to live defeated and

controlled by them. Your armies, which the world with all its gods cannot defeat, I shall now defeat and break using my wisdom, like a stone breaks a clay pot.”

Mara went away, and Siddhartha was left alone in peace.

Siddhartha thought, “Whatever pain a monk or holy man feels, has ever had in the past or will feel in the future, cannot be greater than the pain I am feeling now in my body. But I am still an ordinary, unenlightened human. Might there be another way to enlightenment?”

He remembered that a long time ago when he was a very young boy, his father took him to a plowing ceremony, and he sat alone in the cool shade of the rose-apple tree, and at that time, he had a happy, pleasant meditation.

He thought, “Might that be the way to enlightenment?” He realized, “Yes, meditating happily with a strong, healthy body is the way to enlightenment! Why am I afraid to enjoy the pleasure of meditation? It’s not possible to meditate happily with a weak, starving body. Suppose I ate some solid food, some boiled rice and bread?”

He then went to the village and ate food that the villagers offered to him. It revived him, and he felt better.

But the five ascetics saw him eating food and they thought, “The monk Gautama has given up the struggle for enlightenment and now he wants a life of luxury.” They thought he was a failure. So, they left him.

Questions:

1. What is an ascetic? (a person who avoids comfortable living conditions and distractions, and practices meditation and other techniques to try to control the mind and become enlightened)
2. How did the five ascetics who stayed with Siddhartha know him from before? (one was an astrologer and the others were sons of the other astrologers who saw him as a baby, predicting he will be enlightened)
3. Why did they want to find Siddhartha? (they knew he would become enlightened, and they wanted him to teach them)
4. Why did Mara approach Siddhartha? (he didn’t want Siddhartha to become enlightened)
5. What did Siddhartha say that he would use to conquer the demon armies? (his wisdom)

6. Why did Siddhartha decide to eat normal food again? (he realized he could meditate happily and become enlightened not by starving himself, but by eating and having a healthy, strong body)

What the Buddha said:

“Kāyena saṃvutā dhīrā, atho vācaya saṃvutā, manasā saṃvutā dhīrā, te ve supariṣaṃvutā.”
“The wise are controlled in action, speech and thought. They are truly well-controlled.”
Dhammapada 234 (17:14)

“Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve, kusīto hīnavīriyo, ekāhaṃ jīvitam seyyo, vīriyamārabhato dalhaṃ.”
“Better than living a lazy life for a hundred years without making effort, is to live for one single day strongly making effort.”

Dhammapada 112 (8:13)

Dharma Discussion – Self-Control and Perseverance:

Siddhartha left his wife, son, family and life as a prince for a very important reason. What was that reason? What did he want to find?

The way to end suffering, enlightenment.

He was determined to find the way to end the cycle of birth, suffering, pain, illness, old age, death, and rebirth.

He was so determined that he left everyone he loved and everything he had to live in a forest—among frightening animals like tigers and snakes—with nothing.

In order to do that, he needed to have enormous self-discipline, or self-control.

What exactly is self-control, or self-discipline?

Having control over our body, our speech, and our mind.

What do we mean by having control over our body?

Not just doing whatever we feel like doing, but doing what is better for ourselves and for others.

Choosing to do what is actually good for you rather than what feels good at the moment.

Can you think of some examples?

How do you have self-control when choosing what to eat? You choose healthy food rather than junk food.

How do you have self-control while meditating? You keep your body still, and you sit with your back straight and eyes closed.

What do we mean by having control over our speech?

Not speaking in ways that hurt others, not lying, not shouting when it may disturb others, not talking when we are supposed to be quiet.

For example, how do we have self-control of our speech while in class? Raising your hand and waiting to be called on before speaking.

What about having control over our mind? How do we discipline our mind?

Concentrating, trying to avoid distractions.

We do this when we are concentrating on homework, working on an art project, practicing a sport or practicing playing a musical instrument.

Siddhartha chose to do not what felt good at the moment, being comfortable while living at the palace, but what was really better for himself and everyone.

He had the self-discipline to do what was really the best for everyone, to find a way to end suffering, to find the way to enlightenment.

But he didn't find enlightenment when he left the palace and went to the great meditation masters; he had to try to find it on his own, in the forest.

But he didn't find it even by practicing the most extreme methods of self-control—holding his breath, and starving himself.

He tried and tried to find the way to enlightenment every day, meditating for hours in the hot, cold, windy or rainy weather, outside with wild animals and insects around.

And every day, he didn't find it. Month after month, he didn't find it. After six years, he still didn't find it.

It seems that he failed—he kept failing every day—to find what he was looking for.

But he kept trying. Every day he tried again.

Can you think of a word that means to keep trying, not giving up, even when there are difficulties and failures? Perseverance.

Siddhartha had extreme perseverance. He tried over and over to become enlightened. During six *years* of suffering starvation and extreme discomfort, and still failing to reach enlightenment, Siddhartha did not get frustrated or angry and did not give up.

He did have some success—like he told Mara, he gained mindfulness, concentration and wisdom with his meditation and extreme self-control.

And he had confidence that he could conquer and control all negative qualities—craving, laziness, stubbornness, seeking fame, and so on.

That is what he meant by battling and conquering the demon armies.

He gained this confidence, concentration and power by his perseverance.

What are some experiences that you have had with perseverance?

Some examples are learning to ride a bicycle, swim, play a musical instrument, do a difficult project for school.

We make mistakes, we don't do things perfectly, things go wrong, it's not fun, but we keep trying.

Did you become more confident when you persevered, when you kept trying without giving up?

When we overcome problems and failures, each time we decide not to be lazy or give up, we gain more courage and confidence, more concentration and willpower. That will give us confidence to try many other challenges.

When we are trying hard to do something and we have difficulties, we can remember Siddhartha's challenges and failures, and his perseverance.

Activity:

Statue game: All students except one sit facing the same direction, in a meditation position, perfectly still, like statues. The other student walks around them and tries to make each sitting "statue" student move or smile, without touching anyone. For example, he can say something silly, joke, make funny noises, wave a hand near them, or pretend to tickle them. If a student moves (smiles, frowns, grimaces, etc.), then he is "out." The last person remaining as a "statue" wins.

Chapter 8 – Sujatha’s Offering and Mara’s Challenge

After Siddhartha decided to keep his body healthy by eating normal food every day, he went to the nearby village of Senani so the villagers could offer him food. He was now 35 years old. Because he was eating normally again, he became strong and healthy, the golden color returned to his skin, and the brightness returned to his eyes.

The chief of the village had a daughter named Sujatha, who wished to get married and have a son. In those days in India, people would make wishes to a tree spirit, or deity of the tree, who they believed might grant their wish. Along with their wish, they would also make a promise to give something to the tree spirit if he grants the wish. Following that custom, Sujatha went to a big beautiful banyan tree, and said to the tree spirit:

“If I marry a good husband and have a son, then every year I will make you offerings worth 100,000 gold coins.”

Soon thereafter, she got married and had a son. So she knew she must fulfill her promise. She made very special efforts to make sure her cows would produce the best sweet, rich milk.

When the moon was full in the month called Visakha in the springtime, Sujatha directed the cowherds to milk the cows. As soon as the new cans were placed under their udders, the milk flowed from them immediately! That was impossible! How could that happen? Sujatha stared in wonder.

Then she boiled the milk together with rice. She watched as huge bubbles rose up and strangely, all the bubbles turned to the right, swirling around. When bubbles rise up in such a full pot, some milk would always flow over the edge of the pot. But even though so many huge bubbles arose, none of the milk spilled. Sujatha was amazed, and thought these must be miracles made by the tree spirit to show her that he was pleased. She turned to her servant, Punna, and exclaimed,

“Our deity is pleased! I have never seen miracles happen like this. Run to the banyan tree and prepare the place for the offering.”

Meanwhile, the night before, Siddhartha had five dreams which indicated to him that he would be enlightened that day.

Early in the morning, he found that same big beautiful banyan tree where Sujatha made the promise. He thought it was a good place to meditate, and he sat under it, with his face radiant, golden and serene, deep in meditation.

When Punna arrived at the banyan tree, she saw Siddhartha sitting there and she thought that was the deity of the tree appearing in person waiting to receive the offerings. With great excitement, she ran back to Sujatha and told her what she saw.

Sujatha was thrilled, so she gave Punna gifts of beautiful clothes and jewelry. Sujatha took a golden tray worth 100,000 gold coins and poured the milk-rice on it, filling it, and then covered it. She put on a fresh dress and her best jewelry, and carried the tray on her head to the banyan tree.

She was overjoyed when she saw the radiant Siddhartha sitting under the tree. She bowed to him many times, thinking he was the tree deity to whom she had made her promise and who had granted her wishes. She uncovered the tray and placed it in Siddhartha's hands. She said,

"Lord, please accept my offering. May your wishes be fulfilled as mine have been."

Siddhartha said to her, "Sister, what is to be done with this tray?"

Sujatha replied, "It is for you."

Siddhartha said, "It is of no use for me."

Sujatha said, "You may do with it whatever you wish."

Siddhartha got up and went to the river to bathe, and then put his robes back on and sat on the shore of the river. He made all the milk-rice into 49 lumps, and ate all of it. He threw the tray into the river, thinking, "It will go upstream against the current if I will be successful in becoming enlightened." The tray flew from his hand to the middle of the river, and then traveled far upstream, to where a Black Naga, a snake deity—a powerful snake spirit—received it.

Siddhartha walked along a road, and a man with freshly cut long grass approached him. Seeing that Siddhartha was a holy man, he offered him a big armload of grass. Siddhartha accepted it and went to a bodhi tree, the same kind of tree under which all buddhas sat while attaining enlightenment. He placed the pile of grass beneath the tree and sat on it, cross-legged, facing the east. He made a firm determination:

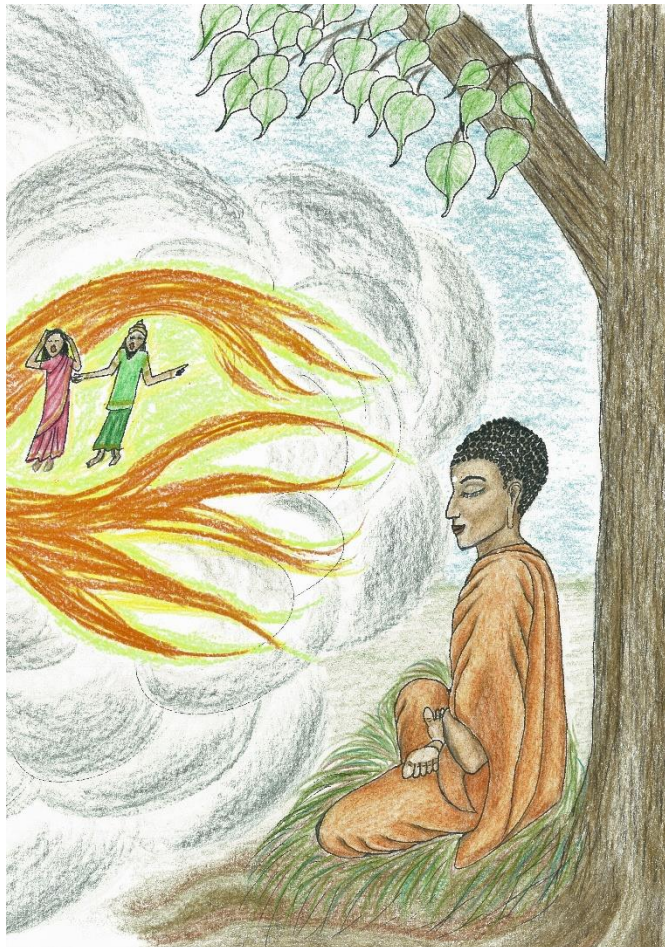
"Even if my skin, flesh and blood become dry, I will not leave this seat until I attain enlightenment, the highest wisdom, nirvana, the end of suffering."

Mara was watching, and he wanted to prevent Siddhartha from becoming enlightened. Seeing Mara coming in the distance, Siddhartha kept his mind strong and focused on his own good qualities—his generosity, truthfulness, patience, perseverance, lovingkindness, wisdom, non-attachment, and so on.

Mara approached Siddhartha and caused a great wind to blow to scare him, and then a terrible rainstorm. These didn't make Siddhartha move or flinch in the slightest. Mara caused a shower of rocks and then weapons to appear falling from the sky. Siddhartha was not at all affected by

these illusions. Mara caused red hot coals, then hot ashes, then sand, and then mud to appear to fall from the sky. Siddhartha, sitting perfectly still, didn't seem affected by any of these.

Then Mara thought that a great darkness would scare him, so Mara made everything appear to be covered in a deep darkness. Still there was no reaction from Siddhartha.



Mara told Siddhartha that his home town Kapilavasthu had been conquered and that his clan, the Sakyans, had been chased away. He threw a fire-shower at Siddhartha with black smoke and terribly loud thunder, and created ghostlike appearances of Yashodhara, his parents and his family and friends running away in fear.

Siddhartha didn't worry. He was totally unmoved.

Mara was extremely frustrated and angry. He shouted to his followers, "Seize, kill, and drive away this prince!"

Siddhartha remained perfectly still and calm.

Mara went closer to Siddhartha, shouting, "Siddhartha, arise from this seat! It doesn't belong to you, it belongs to me!"

Siddhartha replied calmly, "You have not attained the perfections of generosity, moral conduct, renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, lovingkindness, truthfulness, determination, and equanimity. You have not made great donations. You have not made efforts for knowledge, for the welfare of the world, or for enlightenment. The seat doesn't belong to you but to me."

Mara was enraged. He shouted, "Who has witnessed you giving donations?"

Siddhartha calmly looked into the terrible face of Mara, and with great love and compassion looked at Mara as a father looks at his son playing at his feet.

Siddhartha stretched his hand down and touched the earth, replying, "The earth is my witness."

As Siddhartha put his hand to the ground, it shook and a great thundering noise like loud roaring came from the earth. The followers of Mara fled and Mara himself disappeared.

Questions:

1. What did Sujatha believe the tree deity could do for her? (grant her wish to find a good husband and have a son)
2. Why did Sujatha offer Siddhartha milk-rice? (she believed he was the tree deity who had granted her wish)
3. What did Siddhartha do with the milk-rice? (he made it into 49 lumps and ate it)
4. What made Siddhartha believe he would be enlightened that day? (he had five dreams that indicated he would be enlightened, and as he threw the tray he thought it would go upstream if he were to be enlightened that day, and it did go upstream)
5. Why did Mara approach Siddhartha? (he wanted to prevent Siddhartha from being enlightened)
6. How did Siddhartha look at Mara? (with love and compassion, like a father looking at a son)

What the Buddha said:

“Sukkhāṃ yāva jarā silaṃ, sukhā saddhā paṭiṭṭhitā, sukho paññaya paṭilabho, pāpānaṃ akaraṇaṃ sukhāṃ.”

“Good is virtue until life’s end, good is faith that is steadfast, good is the acquisition of wisdom, and good is the avoidance of evil.”

Dhammapada 333 (23:14)

Dharma Discussion – Belief:

Did you find anything in this story hard to believe?

What did you think about the tree spirit, and a belief in tree spirits granting wishes? Did that seem strange to you? And what did you think about the unusual events regarding the milk, and about the snake deity who received the tray, and the tray going upstream? What about Mara, and the illusions he created? And the thundering and roaring sound from the earth? Did you find these difficult to believe?

Many people don't believe in such things, calling them "fairy tales." When they hear such stories in their religion, they often turn away from religion.

How do we separate what is real from what is imagination; how do we know what is fact and what is fiction?

Most people believe only what can be perceived with the five senses or with tools and scientific instruments—such as microscopes, telescopes, cameras, and receivers—that help us perceive what is too tiny, hidden or far away to see or hear with our eyes and ears alone.

This is how we perceive the physical world—the world that we can perceive with the body, the five senses.

Because in our culture, we believe in science.

In modern times, we have more and more wonderful scientific instruments and people devoted to discovering our physical world, so we understand that whatever can be proven in science establishes what is true.

And we have so many interesting movies, videogames and stories based on science fiction, fantasy and imagination, and we all know that they are not real.

So we are taught to believe only in what we can see with our eyes and hear with our ears, and what we understand from science, and not anything else.

But some people sense other beings—metaphysical, supernatural or spiritual beings—that other people don't perceive with their five senses.

Many monks, priests, holy persons others, not only Buddhist but also of most other religions and cultures, since ancient times and even now, see or hear beings such as gods, angels, ghosts, and other spirits.

And many people observe things that don't seem possible.

But they don't talk about it with everyone, knowing they might not believe them.

Understanding this helps us realize that the physical world isn't the only reality.

Even science has found new things that seem not in the physical world, that we can't observe directly even with scientific instruments. Can you think of any examples? Some examples are dark matter, dark energy, and black holes.

We believe they exist because of their effects on objects that can be observed with scientific instruments.

Similarly, we can believe in the Dharma because of its effects on ourselves, and on other people, that we can observe.

Do you ever notice how practicing the Dharma affects you, or people you know?

We can observe the peace that we feel from practicing mindfulness or meditation.

We can observe the kindness, generosity and helpfulness that we see in people who genuinely practice the Dharma.

But what about the events in the story? Should we believe them?

It may be that some events and details in stories about the Buddha, which are 2,600 years old, were added or changed over time and with different translations. But it doesn't matter if we don't know for sure whether all the events in the stories really happened. We don't have to believe everything in the stories.

The most important parts of the story are the Dharma teachings—what we can learn and practice to make our lives, others' lives and the world better, kinder, and more meaningful. There is no reason to throw out the Dharma, the precious teachings, just because we can't prove that all the stories are true.

In stories that you know are fiction, that you know are not true, do you sometimes find something in those stories that teach you something important? Yes, we all do.

Stories are interesting ways to explain things to people.

So in Buddhism, too, we enjoy the stories, as they are entertaining, and we focus on what we can learn from them.

We let the teachings of the stories help us have a happier life and future lives.

Activity:

Make a tiny golden tray from a plastic lid, or from a tiny cardboard box. Cut decorative paper, such as glitter paper or wrapping paper, in appropriate shapes to line the inside, and the inner and outer edges. Then glue them to line the lid or box and cover the inner and outer edges. Next, decorate the tray by sticking on small decorative jewels and/or sequins.

Chapter 9 – Enlightenment

After years of having let his body starve and weaken as he lived in extremely uncomfortable conditions in the forest for six years, Siddhartha—sometimes called “the monk Gautama”—had now eaten and regained his strength, and he sat down on a pile of grass under a big tree with heart-shaped leaves called a bodhi tree. He was absolutely determined not to leave that tree until he attained enlightenment, nirvana, the end of suffering.

He began to meditate, feeling the happiness of being alone, away from the busy world. After many lifetimes of practicing generosity, lovingkindness, patience and other good values, as well as mindfulness and meditation, he had full control over his mind, and could unleash the immense power of meditation. His thoughts became still and he focused his mind, feeling the happiness of pure concentration. He let the feeling of happiness fade away so it wouldn't distract him. He became mindful and fully aware, his mind free of being attracted to anything or avoiding anything. He let go of even the slightest feelings of pleasure or discomfort. His fully concentrated mind was totally pure, perfect and steady, and as vast as space.

He directed his mind to finding out about his past lives. He began to remember some past lives, and then more and more—many thousands of lives, through eons of time. He knew the name he had in each life, the way he looked, the food he ate, what pleasures and pains he experienced, the way he died, how he was reborn, and then all about his next life. Then he could see in his mind the details of so many past lives. The last traces of ignorance were disappearing and true wisdom was arising in his mind in the first part of the night.

In the middle part of the night, he directed his mind to finding out about the rebirth of other beings—when beings pass away and are born into the next life. He now had the “divine eye” that could see the past and future lives of different beings. He could see that they die and take a new birth according to their good and bad actions and behavior, in other words, their karmas. He saw that those beings who misbehaved and who hated good-hearted people were reborn in unpleasant situations, even in hell-worlds. And those beings who were kind, had good behavior and did good deeds were reborn into a happy life with pleasant situations, even in heaven-worlds.

He saw the different worlds that beings were born into—the human world, the heaven-worlds, the world of jealous spirits, the animal world, the hungry ghost world, and the hell-worlds. He could see the good actions that resulted in being born in a human or heaven world, and he could see the bad actions that led to being born into the animal, ghost and hell worlds.

He saw beings passing away and reappearing in the next life, happy or unhappy, lucky or unlucky, in better or worse circumstances, and with beautiful or unattractive bodies. He understood how they were reborn in different situations and circumstances depending on their actions—their good and bad karmas—in their previous lives.

In the last part of the night, he directed his mind to finding out about negative emotions--such as anger, attachment, hatred, jealousy, arrogance, and self-centeredness—and how to get rid of them.

He suddenly knew that life for all beings is full of suffering, which means discomfort, stress, unpleasantness, unhappiness, pain, illness, and grief. Even in the heaven-worlds, beings suffer knowing that their glorious life in heaven will come to an end and they will have to be reborn as a human or in another world. This came to be known as the First Noble Truth.

He also suddenly knew the Second Noble Truth- the cause of suffering—that it arises from attachment, desires, trying to get what we like and trying to avoid what we don't like.

Next, he suddenly knew what became known as the Third Noble Truth—that there is an end to suffering. That is, the suffering doesn't last forever, life after life, but the cycle of rebirth--living, dying, and being reborn over and over again--eventually ends when one attains nirvana. In nirvana, there is no more suffering, desire, hatred or ignorance, so there is ultimate peace and happiness.

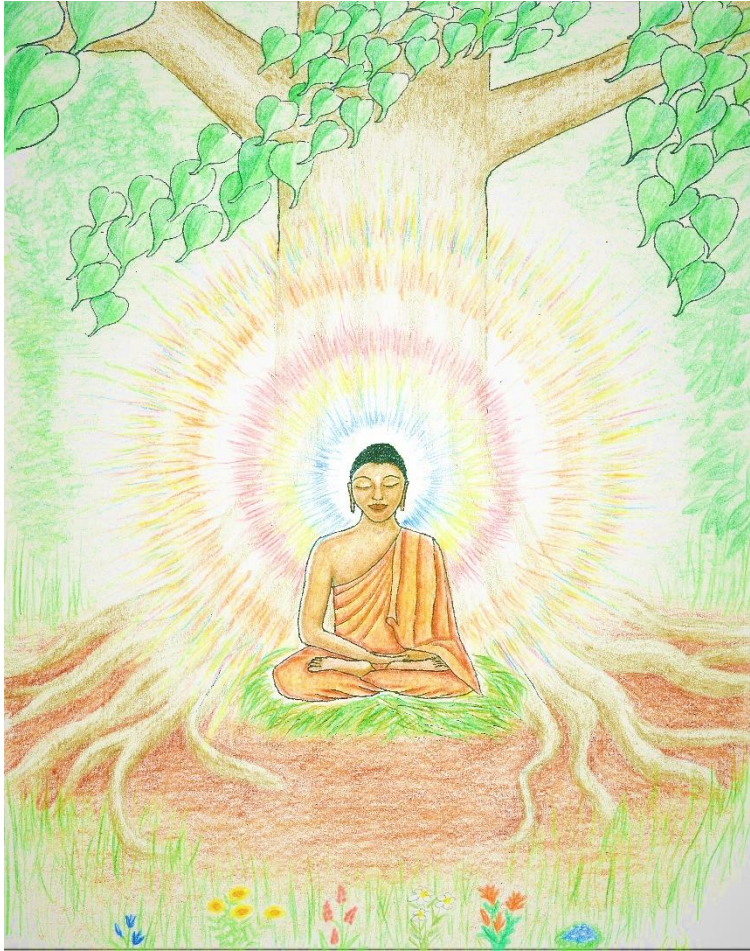
Finally, he knew what was called the Fourth Noble Truth, the way leading to the end of suffering. He knew what beings must do to attain nirvana, that they must practice the eight parts of the path to nirvana, the Noble Eightfold Path, the eight parts of which are:

Right view—knowing that karmas (good and bad actions) have results
Right intention—lovingkindness, determination to not harm others
Right speech—avoid dishonesty, speaking abusively, and idle chatter
Right action—avoid killing, stealing, and misbehaving
Right occupation--earning a living that doesn't harm or cheat others
Right effort—increase compassion and kindness, avoid anger and hatred
Right mindfulness—being calm and fully aware of the present moment
Right concentration—meditating on one thing without distraction.

He knew it was the same ancient Noble Eightfold Path that was discovered by all of the past Buddhas from ages ago.

He understood how everything came into existence and why we are born; all the deepest wisdom arose in his mind.

He also realized that he had attained nirvana, that he was fully liberated, totally free from all desires and all ignorance. He was completely satisfied; there was nothing else he could possibly want. He would never have to be reborn in any world again. He had accomplished the goal of life, the result of all his efforts over countless lifetimes.



His mind and body were so purified, that sometimes people could see rays of light radiating from him in six colors – blue, yellow, red, white, orange and a mix of those colors.

Siddhartha had now become a fully enlightened Buddha, which means the Awakened One. He was fully awakened from the ignorance of his mind, like a person awakens from sleep and realizes that his dream was only in his mind.

From that time on, he was known as Gautama Buddha, or the Buddha.

Questions:

1. What was Siddhartha determined to attain when he sat under the Bodhi Tree? (enlightenment, nirvana, the end of suffering)
2. What did he do when he first sat under the tree? (he meditated)
3. What did he remember in the first part of the night? (his past lives)
4. What did he see in the second part of the night? (past and future lives of other beings, the different worlds, how good and bad actions affect the future life of beings)
5. What did he suddenly know in the third part of the night? (the Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, and that he had attained nirvana, enlightenment)
6. What does “Buddha” mean? (the Awakened One)

What the Buddha said:

“Ārogya paramā lābhā, santutṭhi paramaṃ dhanaṃ, vissāsaparamā ñatī, nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ.”

“Health is the greatest gift and contentment is the greatest wealth. A trustworthy person is the best kinsman, and nirvana is the highest bliss.”

Dhammapada 204 (15:8)

Dharma Discussion – Karma and the Path:

Prince Siddhartha always had great compassion for all beings,
So, from the time he saw people who were very old, ill, or dead,
he was determined to find out why all people must suffer
and how they can put a stop to all their suffering and be truly, completely happy.

When he sat under the Bodhi Tree, he meditated so that he would reach enlightenment.
This would not only end his own cycle of rebirth, meaning he would not have to suffer more births, suffering and death, but also, enlightenment meant that he would have the wisdom to know how to help others reach nirvana.

What does nirvana mean, exactly?

Nirvana means to extinguish, like putting out a fire.

The discomforts and sufferings of life are extinguished.

And all greed (or attachment), hatred (or aversion) and ignorance are extinguished.

How would you feel if you had not even the slightest discomfort, worry, fear, anger, stress, pain, sadness, boredom, loneliness, frustration, or any other bad feeling, and there was absolutely nothing more that you wanted?

It's hard to imagine, because every day, we always experience at least a tiny bit of discomfort, unpleasantness, worries, fears, or stress.

Can you think of any examples? Feeling tired, hungry, annoyed, bored, disappointed.

If all negative feelings totally disappeared, how would you feel?

You would feel total peace and happiness.

So, one who has attained nirvana lives in total peace and happiness.

What does enlightenment mean?

It means almost the same as nirvana, but the focus is on the level of wisdom.

There are different levels of enlightenment.

The Buddha reached the highest level of enlightenment, having perfect wisdom.

He knew everything, and knew answers to any question.

What does karma mean, exactly?

Karma is action that has an effect or result.

If you do something good, then something good will happen to you.
If you knowingly do something bad, then something bad will happen to you as a result.
But if you accidentally harm someone, then there is not a bad result.
So, karma is action that you do with good or bad intent, which leads to a good or bad result.
The result may happen in this lifetime or in a future lifetime.
That is why good people have bad experiences—we all have done some things in our past lives that were bad.
And that is also why misbehaved people sometimes seem to be so lucky—they have done good things in their past lives.

The Buddha saw how people’s behaviors led to so much suffering, and with his great compassion, he wanted to help them, to show them the way out of that misery.
So, what was the way that he saw they could escape from their suffering?
The Noble Eightfold Path.

But what about young people? They have a whole life ahead of them and aren’t thinking about reaching nirvana.
So, should kids just forget about nirvana because they aren’t adults yet? No.
We should know what the ultimate goal is like a person driving should remember where he is going, even if the journey is very long, so he doesn’t get lost and have to suffer more.
How do we get to nirvana? By following the Eightfold Path.
Like the driver must know how to get where he is going by following a map or instructions how to get there.

But, do we follow the Eightfold Path only so we can eventually get to nirvana in the distant future? Or is there any other reason?
We also follow the Eightfold Path so we can be happier right now, in this life. How do you feel when you help others, speak kindly and honestly, have compassionate thoughts toward others, or develop good habits?
We become happier, more confident, and more peaceful.
So we make our future, and our future lives, happier and more fortunate. Siddhartha saw this while he sat under the Bodhi Tree; he saw that the good deeds of a person resulted in a better future birth—with a healthy body, intelligent mind, and pleasant experiences.

Activities:

- A. Students can memorize the elements of the Eight-Fold Path with the following method:
1. Point to your eyes and say “Right View” (or “Samma Ditthi”)
 2. Put the palm of your right hand on your heart and say “Right Intention” (“Right Thought” or “Samma Sankappa”).
 3. Point to your mouth and say “Right Speech” (or “Samma Vacha”).
 4. Raise your hands in front of you and move your fingers in and out and say “Right Action” (or “Samma Kammanta”).

5. Lower one of your hands on your side and pretend you are carrying a briefcase, and say “Right Occupation” (or Samma Ajiva”).
6. Put right hand to brow as if shading your eyes to look for what is good, left hand held up as if to stop negative influences from coming near, and say “Right Effort” [whole mind and body effort] (or “Samma Vayama”).
7. Point to your head and say “Right Mindfulness” (or “Samma Sati”).
8. Place your hands in front of you with palms up and say “Right Concentration” (or “Samma Samadhi”).

The teacher can demonstrate first a few times, then the teacher does each action and asks students to say the corresponding words until they all say it correctly. Then the teacher asks students to volunteer to demonstrate, one at a time, until each student demonstrates all eight parts of the Noble Eightfold Path.¹

B. Cut paper into the shape of a bodhi leaf, and write the Four Noble Truths neatly on it, and decorate it with markers, glitter glue or sequins.

C. Cut poster paper in the shape of a circle, draw a Dharma wheel with eight spokes on it, and write one of the eight parts of the Noble Eightfold Path on each of the eight spokes of the wheel.

¹ This technique of teaching children to memorize the Eightfold Path was created by Mr. Souksomboun Sayasithsena.

Chapter 10 – First Seven Weeks After Enlightenment

After the Buddha became enlightened, he stayed where he was, sitting under the Bodhi Tree, for one week. He was feeling the ultimate happiness and peace of enlightenment.

After that week, he concentrated on the causes and effects of all things. He saw that everything that exists arises from something else. Nothing just pops into existence from nowhere. Every single thing arises from causes and conditions. That means that each thing exists because of many situations, that arose from other situations, which arose from yet countless other situations, on and on endlessly back through time. He knew why there is birth, aging and death. He knew exactly how suffering arises, and exactly how it can come to an end.

He looked around with the eyes of an Enlightened One, and saw all the people and other beings full of desire, hatred, ignorance, who want to stay as they are, and don't know that what they like actually brings fear and pain, and is always changing. When they stop clinging to what they like, they can escape suffering and become enlightened.

The second week after his enlightenment, he got up and stood near the Bodhi Tree for seven days, looking at it without moving his eyes, meditating with gratitude to the tree, thankful that it sheltered him during his enlightenment.

The third week, the Buddha became aware that beings in heaven-worlds did not know whether he was completely enlightened. To show them that he was, he created instantly a golden bridge with jewels on it, and he walked on the bridge for one week so they would see that he had the powers of being fully enlightened.

The fourth week, the Buddha instantly created a jeweled chamber with a seat in it, near the Bodhi Tree. He meditated in it for one week, understanding the highest wisdom.

There were rays of light surrounding him, forming a halo, with blue light the closest around him, then yellow light a little further out, then red light a bit further, then white, then orange, and then a mix of all of the colors.

The fifth week after his enlightenment, the Buddha finally walked away from the Bodhi Tree. He walked to a banyan tree, which has long, widely-spread branches supported by additional roots that hang down from the branches to the ground. He sat there for seven days in deep, peaceful meditation.

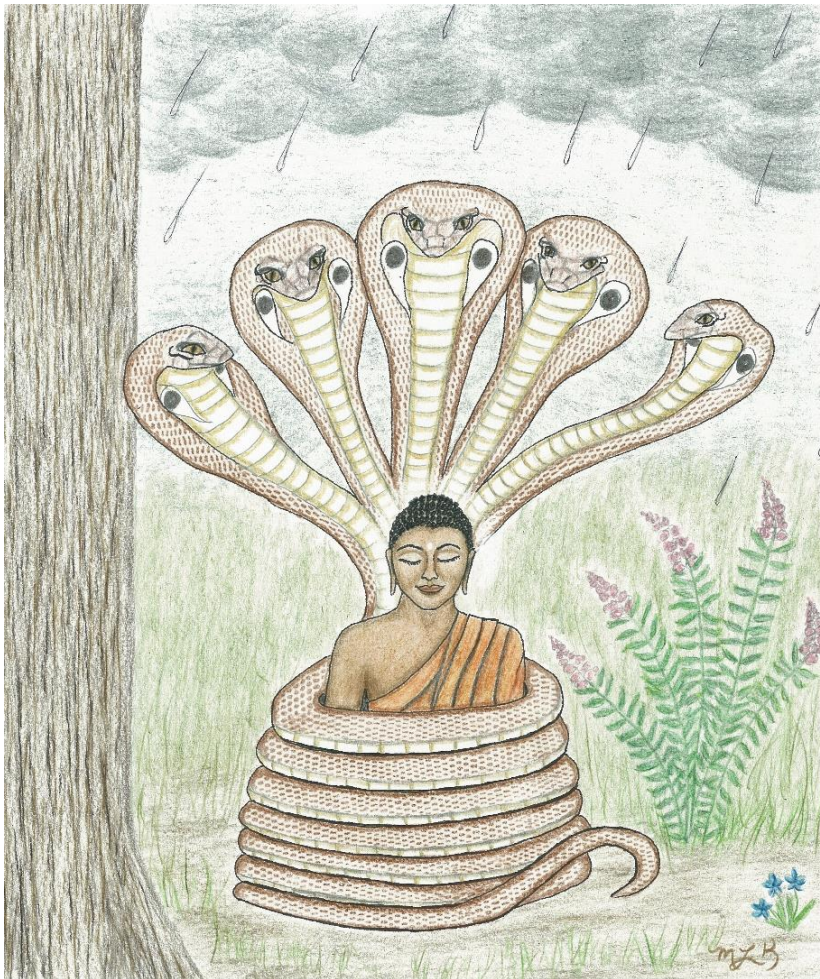
Then, a man who was a brahmin—a priest, a person of the most respected, highest level of society—walked up to the Buddha and greeted him, and they had a polite conversation. But the brahmin was very arrogant. He asked,

“What is a brahmin, Master Gautama? What things make a person a brahmin?”

The Buddha replied, "A brahmin has no evil about him and is not arrogant. He is pure and self-controlled, perfect in knowledge and living a moral life. He does not want to show off."

The brahmin was not pleased to hear this. He wanted confirmation that he was a great brahmin. Instead, questions and doubts arose in his mind, "Do I have evil thoughts? Am I arrogant? Am I pure? Am I self-controlled? Am I perfect in knowledge? Am I living a moral life? Do I try to show off my knowledge and intelligence?" He hated to think about this, so he decided to leave the Buddha.

The sixth week after enlightenment, the Buddha walked to another tree. A big storm came, with huge dark clouds, cold wind and rain. A great royal naga named Mucalinda, a spirit who usually appears in the form of a huge cobra snake with five heads, came from his celestial world and wrapped his body around the Buddha. Mucalinda coiled his body around the Buddha's body seven times and spread his five great cobra hoods over the Buddha to protect him, thinking,



"Let the Buddha not feel any cold, heat, insects, wind, sun or creeping things on his body."

The storm lasted seven days, and Mucalinda remained coiled around the Buddha, protecting him the storm.

Then the sun came out and the clouds disappeared, so the sky became blue and clear. Mucalinda unwrapped his coils from the Buddha's body and changed his form into a brahmin boy, standing in front of the Buddha with his palms together in devotion.

Grateful for protecting him from the storm, the Buddha taught him Dharma by saying, "Being alone is happiness for a person who is contented, who

has learned and understood the Dharma. Friendliness to everyone in the world is happiness for a person who does not harm any living beings. Detachment from the world is happiness for a

person who has overcome desires of the five senses. But to get rid of clinging to thoughts of your self, the 'I,' is the greatest happiness of all."

The seventh week after enlightenment, the Buddha went from the Mucalinda Tree to the Rajayatana Tree and stayed there for seven days, meditating and feeling the peace of enlightenment.

At the end of the seventh week after his enlightenment, two traders, named Tapussa and Bhalluka, were traveling along a road to sell their goods. A relative of theirs who had passed away and been born in a heaven-world appeared to them and said,

"Good sirs, there is this Blessed One living at the root of the Rajayatana Tree who has just become enlightened. Go and honor him with an offering of rice cake and honey so that we may be well and happy for a long time."

So, they went to the Buddha, sitting under the tree, bowed to him and said, "Lord let the Blessed One accept this rice cake and honey so that we may be blessed with well-being and happiness."

The Buddha thought, "The Buddhas do not accept food into their hands. In what should I accept the rice cake and honey?"

In a heaven-world, the four kings of the four directions heard his question and rushed to help him. They brought four crystal bowls, and offered them to the Buddha, saying,

"Lord, let the Blessed One accept the rice cake and honey in these."

The Buddha then accepted the rice cake and honey into the bowls and ate.

Then Tapussa and Bhalluka, happy that the Buddha had accepted their offering and blessed them, said, "We go for refuge to the Buddha and to the Dharma. Beginning from today may the Buddha consider us as his followers for as long as we live."

These traders were the first followers of the Buddha.

Meanwhile, Mara had not forgotten the Buddha, and had not given up on trying to prevent him from becoming enlightened. He didn't know the Buddha was now enlightened. He appeared to the Buddha, and said,

"You are all alone in the woods—aren't you sad and lonely? Why don't you make friends among the people? Isn't there anyone that you can call a friend?"

The Buddha replied, "I have gotten rid of the cause of suffering, so I have no sadness, no attachments. I am peaceful in meditation."

Mara said, "If you have any thoughts like 'it is mine' then you cannot escape me, monk."

The Buddha replied, "I don't call anything 'mine.' Hear this, Evil One, the path I know you cannot even see."

Mara said, "If you have truly found a path that leads safely to the end of birth and death, then leave. But go alone. What need is there for anyone else to know?"

The Buddha told him, "People who want to be liberated ask me how they can attain the state where there is no death. When asked, I tell them about the end of all suffering, where there is no cause for rebirth."

Mara was very disappointed, and left. He sat down on the ground not far away from the Buddha, his shoulders drooping and head down, feeling depressed, with nothing to say. His three daughters, named Tanha (which means craving), Arati (which means dislike) and Raga (which means attachment), saw their father looking upset. They asked,

"Oh father, why are you upset? Who are you upset with? We can catch him and bring him back again into your power!"

Mara was not so confident that they could do so. He said, "There is an arahant in the world, and when a man escapes from Mara there are no temptations to lure him back again. That is why I grieve so much."

The daughters went to the Buddha, and bowed to him, and said, "Oh Monk, we worship you."

The Buddha ignored them. They created magical appearances of hundreds of all kinds of beautiful women who danced to tempt him to look at them. But he didn't pay any attention to them. The daughters of Mara realized that the Buddha had absolutely no desire or craving, so they went back to their father.

Seeing them coming, he said, "Fools! You tried to split a rock by poking it with lily stems, and so you come from Gautama frustrated."

Questions:

1. What was the Buddha feeling toward the Bodhi Tree while he stood meditating, looking at it for a week without moving his eyes? (he was feeling gratitude to the tree)
2. Why did the Buddha create the golden bridge and walk on it for a week? (because some beings in heaven-worlds didn't know whether he was completely enlightened)

3. What are the colors of the halo light rays that came from the Buddha (blue, yellow, red, white, orange and a mix of colors)
4. How did the Buddha show gratitude to Mucalinda? (he taught him Dharma)
5. Who were the first followers of the Buddha? (the two traders)
6. Why was Mara so upset? (he knew the Buddha had become enlightened, and Mara had no power over him)

What the Buddha said:

“Gāravo ca nivāto ca, santhutṭhī ca kataññutā, kālena dhammasavanaṃ, etaṃ mangalamuttamaṃ.”

“Reverence, humility, contentment, gratitude and listening to the Dharma, this is the best way.”

Mahamangala Sutta

Dharma Discussion - Gratitude:

We heard the words gratitude, grateful and thankful in the story. They mean the same thing. Who in the story was grateful, what were they grateful for, and how did they show their gratitude?

The Buddha was grateful toward the Bodhi Tree and Mucalinda, for sheltering and protecting him.

He showed his gratitude to the tree by meditating with gratitude toward it while looking at it for a week.

He showed his gratitude toward Mucalinda by teaching him Dharma.

Was there anyone else who seemed grateful? The traders seemed happy and grateful for the blessing, when they promised to be the Buddha’s followers for the rest of their lives.

Was there anyone in the story who seemed ungrateful?

The brahmin. Why didn’t he like what the Buddha said, and why wasn’t he grateful for his guidance? It threatened his ego. He was arrogant, and couldn’t stand to see weaknesses in himself. He couldn’t see the good in others as he was always trying to make himself seem better than everyone else.

Who else was ungrateful? Mara.

He called his daughters “fools” and although they weren’t successful in tempting the Buddha, he didn’t appreciate that they at least tried to help him.

We know it’s good to be thankful. How is it good for us? What happens to our mood when we’re thankful?

It uplifts our mood. While you are thinking of all the things you are grateful for, you naturally feel happy about them.

It also helps up bond with others, to exchange lovingkindness, when we express our gratitude to them, when we say or do something to show that we're thankful.

But sometimes it's hard to be grateful.

For example, Mara wasn't feeling grateful toward his daughters when he was very depressed. His mind was dwelling on his failure to overpower the Buddha.

Similarly, when we feel upset, our mind often keeps thinking about our failure, our loss, what we didn't get, what we don't have, or what harmed us.

Then, when someone tells us to appreciate what we have, it's difficult.

We might feel angry or resentful. We might think things are unfair.

Then we are stuck in unhappy thoughts. We all feel this way sometimes.

It's also hard to feel grateful when we think we are unlucky compared to our friends or classmates, or a brother or sister, or other people.

We feel that something is unfair.

We might try to find ways to make things fair or better for ourselves. As long as we aren't harming others or ourselves, that's okay.

But it's also important to find ways to calm your mind so you can stay healthy and balanced, able to do your best and succeed, and not be weighed down by too many negative thoughts.

How can we do that? How can we feel grateful and uplift our mood?

Is there a way to lift our minds out of those unhappy thoughts?

It helps to have a habit of being grateful. Why do you think that might help us?

When we often think about how lucky we are to have the things we have, then we are more likely to remember those thoughts when we are upset.

We also notice more and more things to be grateful for, so we have more and more happy thoughts.

What are some basic examples of things we can be thankful for?

A healthy body; nice family, friends; enough good food and clothes; good teachers; people who have helped us, given things to us, been kind to us; a nice home, a safe community to live in; our talents and skills; being able to learn the Dharma.

This is just a start. There are are countless things, even small things that give us a little relief, that we can be grateful for every day.

For example, like the Buddha, we can be thankful for the comfortable shade of a tree that protects us from the heat of the sun.

Activities:

1. Sitting in a circle, students toss a ball to another student while saying any event, person, thing, experience or circumstance for which he or she is grateful.
2. Write "I am grateful for . . ." and then write a list of things, people, events, experiences and circumstances for which you are grateful. Keep the list to look at when you're feeling unhappy.

Chapter 11 – Deciding to Teach

After the traders Tapussa and Bhalluka became his first followers, the Buddha sat deep in thought.

“The Dharma that I have discovered is very deep and hard to understand. It is the most peaceful and highest goal of all. It is not reached just by reasoning; it is for the wise to experience. But people have so many desires, so many things they are attached to that they want to enjoy. So it’s hard for these people to see this truth that I have discovered. Even I found it hard to reach the Dharma, and the end of desire and craving, nirvana. If I taught the Dharma, others would not understand me, and I would become worn out and troubled trying to teach them. So, maybe I will not teach the Dharma.”

In a brahma-world, which is a heaven-world where very wise beings called brahmas exist, was a brahma named Sahampati. In a past life he was a monk and student of the Buddha Kassapa, a buddha who lived a long time ago, before the present Buddha. Brahma Sahampati, becoming aware of what was in the Buddha’s mind, thought in response:

“The world will be lost, the world will be totally lost, if the Perfect One, the Fully Enlightened One, does not teach the Dharma!”

Brahma Sahampati immediately vanished from the brahma-world and appeared with his palms together before the Buddha, saying,

“Lord, teach the Dharma. There are beings with little dust on their eyes who are wasting their lives by not hearing the Dharma. Some of them will attain final knowledge of the Dharma.”

When he said “beings with little dust on their eyes,” he meant there are people with only a little ignorance, who have enough wisdom to learn Dharma and see the truth.

Brahma Sahampati continued, “In Magadha until now there have been only men who are teaching an impure dharma. Let them hear the Dharma that you have found! Look at all the humans who are full of suffering! Arise, victorious hero, bringer of knowledge, wander in the world and teach the Dharma, for some, O Blessed One, will understand.”

The Buddha listened to what Brahma Sahampati said. Now that he was enlightened, the Buddha had the “divine eye,” supernatural vision with which he could see what others could not see. He could see all around the earth. With compassion, he looked at the beings on the earth and saw that there were people who had only a little ignorance and people who had a lot of ignorance, people who were intelligent and people who were not intelligent, people with virtues and people with bad qualities, people who were easy to teach and people who were hard to teach.

Then, in response to Brahma Sahampati, the Buddha agreed to teach the Dharma to the beings in the world.

Brahma Sahampati was very satisfied, thinking “I have made it possible for the Dharma to be taught by the Buddha.” He bowed to the Buddha and vanished as he went back to the brahma world.

The Buddha thought, “To whom should I teach the Dharma first? Who will soon understand this Dharma?” Then he thought, “My teacher Alara Kalama is wise and well educated. He has had only a little dust on his eyes for a long time. Suppose I teach the Dharma first to him? He would soon understand it.”

But some invisible heavenly beings told the Buddha, “Lord, Alara Kalama died seven days ago.”

The Buddha felt the great loss of this teacher. He then thought,

“My other teacher Uddaka Ramaputta is wise and well educated. He has had only a little dust on his eyes for a long time. Suppose I teach the Dharma first to him? He will soon understand it.”

But invisible heavenly beings told the Buddha, “Lord, Uddaka Ramaputta died last night.”

The Buddha felt the great loss of his kind teacher. Then, wondering again who would soon understand the Dharma, he thought about the five ascetics who were very helpful to him for the six years he lived in the forest. With his divine eye, he could see that they were near the city of Varanasi in the Deer Park, which is a holy place in India where previous Buddhas had taught the Dharma. So, he started walking toward Deer Park.

Traveling along the same road was a monk called Upaka, who had left his family to study with a teacher to become enlightened. Upaka, seeing how unusually radiant and peaceful the Buddha looked, said:

“You look so peaceful, friend, and your skin is clear and bright. Who is your teacher? Whose dharma do you practice?”

The Buddha replied, “I am beyond everything, I know all; purified, having given up everything, I have destroyed craving by my own wisdom. I have no teacher, there is no one like me in the world with all its gods. I am the teacher in the world like no other teacher. I alone am enlightened with all craving destroyed. I go now to set the Wheel of Dharma in motion, in a blindfolded world.” He meant that he was going to teach Dharma to people who cannot yet see the truth.

Upaka said, “According to your claims, you are victorious in the whole Universe.”

The Buddha replied, “The victorious ones like me, Upaka, are those who have gotten rid of all their impurities; I have expelled all evil. That is why I am a victorious one.”

Upaka then said “May it be so, friend,” and shaking his head, he went on his way.

When the Buddha arrived at the Deer Park, the five ascetics saw the Buddha coming in the distance. One of them said:

“Friends, here comes the monk Gautama who wanted to live in comfort and luxury and gave up the effort to become enlightened. We shouldn’t bow to him or stand up in respect or receive his bowl and outer robe. But we can prepare a seat for him. Let him sit down if he likes.”

They all agreed. But as soon as the Buddha came close, they couldn’t keep their agreement because they felt great respect for him. One of them went to meet him and took his bowl and outer robe. Another prepared a seat for him. Another set out water, a footstool, and a towel. The Buddha sat on the seat they prepared and washed his feet.

They greeted him, calling him “friend Gautama.”

Referring to himself as Perfect One, the Buddha told them, “Monks, don’t address the Perfect One by his name and as ‘friend’: the Perfect One is fully enlightened. Listen, monks, the goal has been attained. I shall teach you the Dharma. By practicing as you are taught, by realizing it yourselves here and now through direct knowledge, you will reach directly the goal of the holy life that all monks are trying to reach.”

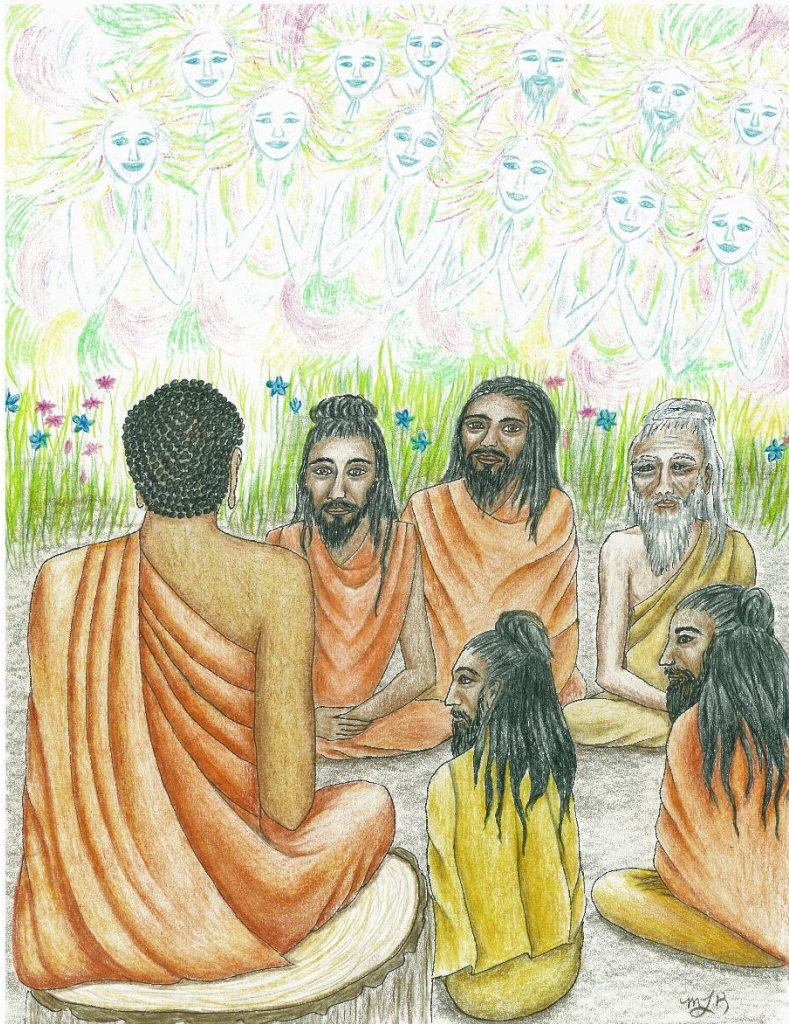
One of the five ascetics said, “Friend Gautama, even with the extremely difficult ascetic practices you did, you didn’t go beyond the ordinary human level. Since you are now living in comfort and luxury and have given up the effort to become enlightened, how can you have reached any goal?”

The Buddha said, “The Perfect One is not living in comfort and luxury, and did not give up the effort. The Perfect One is fully enlightened. Listen, monks, I have reached the goal. I shall instruct you. I shall teach you the Dharma. By practicing it you will reach the goal. “

But the five ascetics still had doubts. They didn’t believe him.

The Buddha asked, “Monks, have you ever heard me speak like this before?”

The five ascetics replied, “No, Lord.”



Finally, the Buddha convinced them, and then they listened very attentively to what he taught them, which was his first Dharma lecture.

He taught them that monks should avoid the two extremes of luxury and self-torture, both of which are harmful. He said that the middle way that he discovered avoids these two extremes, and gives knowledge, peace, enlightenment and nirvana. He said that the middle way is the Eightfold Path which consists of right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

He also taught them the Four Noble Truths. He explained that the first is the noble truth of suffering, and that birth, ageing, sickness, death, sadness, pain,

experiencing what one hates, being separated from what one loves, and not getting what one wants, are suffering. He taught that the second noble truth is the cause of suffering, which is craving, wanting, enjoying things and wanting more. He explained the third noble truth: that there is an end of suffering, which happens when wanting and craving fade away, when they are given up and let go; because when one stops wanting something, then the agony of not getting it disappears. He taught that the fourth noble truth is the way that leads to the end of suffering, and that this way is the Noble Eightfold Path: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

The Buddha explained that to fully understand the Four Noble Truths, one must fully experience them.

While the Buddha was giving this teaching, the earth spirits and heavenly beings in all the heaven-worlds and the brahma worlds were so happy that the Buddha began teaching Dharma that the earth trembled and a brilliant light appeared.

Also while the Buddha was teaching, one of the five ascetics, Kondañña, had a pure vision and understanding of the Dharma. The Buddha exclaimed,

“Kondañña knows, Kondañña knows!”

From then on, he was known as Aññata Kondañña, which means “Kondañña-who-knows.” He had full confidence in the Buddha’s teaching, and said,

“Lord, I wish to be ordained as a monk by you.”

The Buddha said, “Come, monk. The Dharma is well taught. Live the holy life for the complete ending of suffering.” And that was the way Kondañña became the first Buddhist monk.

After the Buddha taught more, the other four ascetics also had a pure vision and understanding of the Dharma, and they asked to become monks. The Buddha ordained them in the same simple manner to be the first Buddhist monks.

The five new monks were very happy, and thrilled to hear him teach. Listening to his teachings, all of their remaining impurities vanished, and they had no more desires or craving. They became arahants, humans who are enlightened, who have completed the cycle of birth and death and reached the goal of human life.

Questions:

1. Why did the Buddha at first not want to teach the Dharma? (it is hard to understand, so he thought that people wouldn’t understand it)
2. When Brahma Sahampati knew that the Buddha was thinking of not teaching, what did he do? (he appeared to the Buddha and asked him to teach)
3. Why did Brahma Sahampati think that the Buddha should teach? (because some people have only a little ignorance and will understand it)
4. Why did the monk Upaka notice was special about the way the Buddha looked? (he looked so peaceful and his skin was clear and bright)
5. Why did the five ascetics agree not to bow and show respect to the Buddha? (they thought he wanted comfort and luxury instead of becoming enlightened)
6. What did the five ascetics become after hearing the Buddha teach? (the first Buddhist monks and the first arahants)

What the Buddha said:

“Dhīro ca dānaṃ anumodamāno, teneva so hoti sukhī parattha.”

“The wise man rejoices in giving, and by that alone does he become happy hereafter.”

Dhammapada 177 (13:11)

Dharma Discussion: Show Gratitude:

The Buddha achieved the most valuable thing possible. What was it?

Full enlightenment.

Having something so valuable, what did he want to do with it?

He wanted to share it with others.

Have you ever gotten something really special and wanted to share it with others?

Maybe you wanted to share a new videogame or toy, or a new pet, or something new you learned in a sport, art, music or dance.

Can you remember why you wanted to share?

Was it just to show others what you have or what you can do?

Or did you really want them to enjoy it, or to learn it also?

If we just want others to see what we have, it might seem like we’re showing off, and it could make others feel jealous or annoyed.

To avoid that, and can share with kindness, so others enjoy what we’re sharing. How can we do that?

We can share while feeling gratitude for the good things we have.

What is gratitude?

Feeling thankful for what we have, feeling grateful to those who helped us or who gave to us, rather than “taking it for granted,” just expecting to get things.

How do you usually show gratitude? We usually say “thank you.”

But can you think of any other ways to show your gratitude?

We can do something kind to the people who gave to us or helped us, in return for their kindness.

Or, we can do something kind for other people.

Feeling grateful for the happiness and good things we have, we can share with others—give them something or help them in some way—so we are sharing our happiness.

It’s similar to someone paying you, and then instead of paying them back, you pay it to someone else who needs it.

That’s called “paying it forward.”

This is how we share while feeling gratitude for the good things we have.

The Buddha shared while feeling gratitude.

He taught Dharma to Mucalinda, the royal naga, in gratitude for protecting him from the storm. And he wanted to share the Dharma in gratitude to his teachers and to the five ascetics in return for helping him before.

In addition, he was feeling the greatest happiness of being enlightened, so he wanted to share the happiness with others by teaching them the Dharma.

But sometimes our enthusiasm to share could be taken the wrong way.

In the story, when the Buddha told others about his great accomplishment that he wanted to share, what happened? When he told Upaka and the five ascetics that he was fully enlightened, how did they respond? They didn't believe him. Upaka walked away, and the ascetics accused the Buddha of living in luxury.

So we see that telling people that we have something wonderful can turn people away because it seems like bragging, or they might not believe it.

Or they may feel jealous or annoyed.

So, later, the Buddha later told his students not to show off or tell others about their powers or achievements.

How did the five ascetics show their gratitude to the Buddha for teaching them the Dharma?

They didn't own anything, so what did they give him?

They gave him the most valuable thing that they could give: they dedicated their lives to him as his students.

Can you think of examples of how people can you show their gratitude, or how they can pay it forward when they get something very special?

When adults are thankful for their job, they work very hard for their boss.

When people hear a monk teach the Dharma very well, they serve the temple, for example, by bringing food, helping the monks, cleaning the temple, and giving donations.

When people are invited to a party, they might show their gratitude by bringing a gift for the host of the party.

How can you show gratitude to your parents for their hard work taking care of you?

You can help them in many ways at home—cleaning, putting things away, etc.

How can you show your gratitude to your teachers for their hard work preparing lessons for you?

They really appreciate when you listen to them carefully and show interest in what they teach, and when you are respectful, patient, and helpful.

How can you show your gratitude to those who teach you the Dharma?

By *practicing* the Dharma, for example, by showing kindness to others, remembering to find ways to be helpful, wherever we are, whatever ways we can.

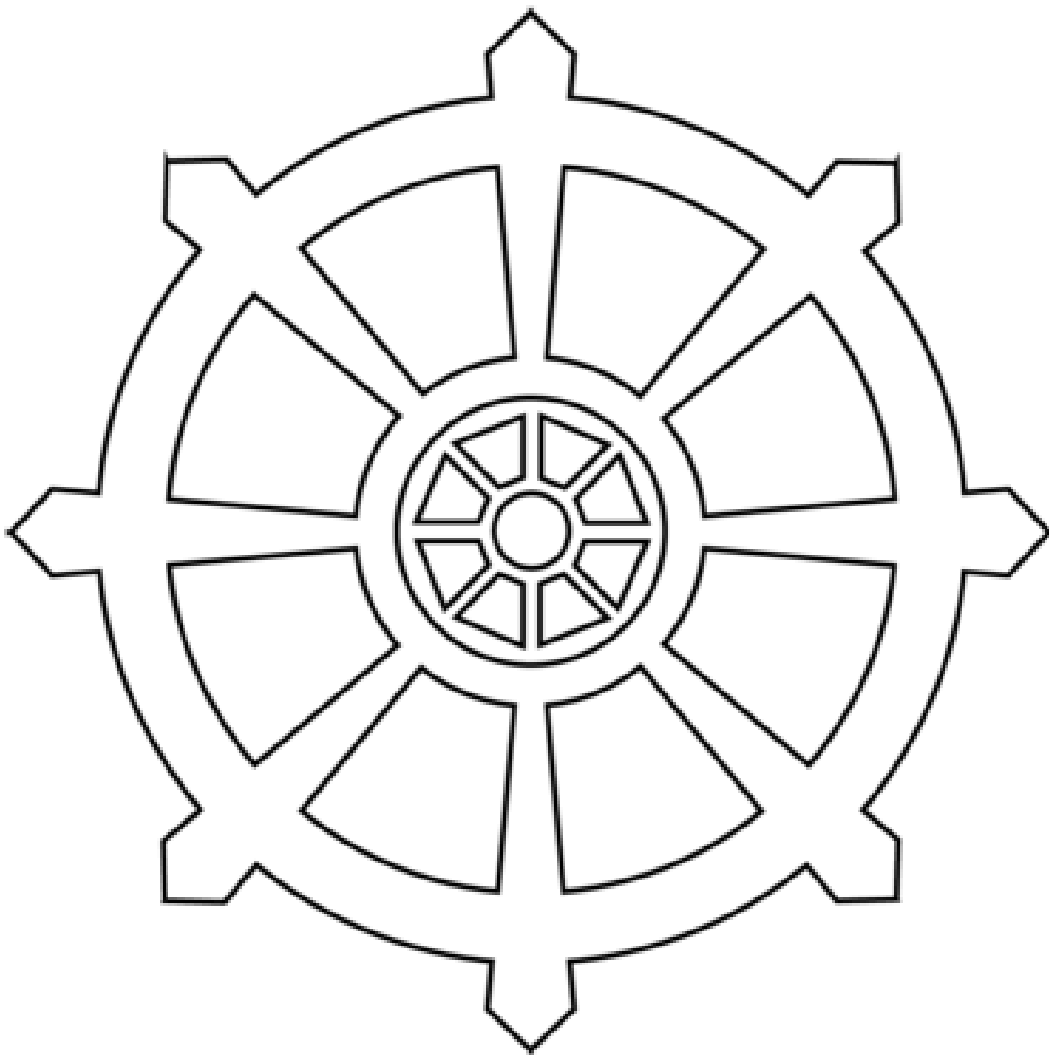
Also, we can share our happiness by just smiling. Sometimes people are unhappy, lonely or stressed, and when they see you smile, it makes them feel appreciated and brightens their day.

How does it make you feel when you have made someone happy?

It makes *us* happy to see that we have made others happy.

Activity:

Draw the Dharma Wheel below on cardboard and cut it out along the outer edges, to make a template. On a sheet of sturdy paper or poster paper, each student traces, or rubs the side of a crayon around, the edge of the cardboard Dharma Wheel. Next, each student draws the spokes and hub of the Dharma Wheel on their paper so it looks like the template. Then each student labels the elements of the Eight-Fold Path (i.e., "Right View") on, or to the side of, the spokes of the wheel. The Dharma Wheel can be decorated with markers, sequins, jewels, etc.



Chapter 12 – Yasa and the Kassapas Meet the Buddha

One evening, a very wealthy young man named Yasa was listening to musicians in his palace, and he fell asleep. When he awoke, he saw the musicians asleep with their instruments in their hands. One had her hair loose and wild over her face, one was drooling and others were mumbling in their sleep.

Yasa thought that they looked so disgusting—like dead bodies or ghosts—that he exclaimed, “It is frightening, it is horrible!”

He put on his golden shoes and went to the door of his palace. The door was suddenly opened by invisible heavenly beings who knew what was about to happen—Yasa was going to become a monk—and they wanted to encourage him to go. He walked down the road to the entrance gate of the walled city. That gate also was opened by invisible heavenly beings who wanted to make sure he would become a monk. He walked out the gate and went to the Deer Park, where the Buddha was staying.

Although the sun had not yet risen, the Buddha was walking outside and saw him coming in the distance.

As Yasa approached, still upset about the disgusting scene at his palace, he exclaimed, “It is frightening, it is horrible!”

The Buddha said, “This is not frightening, this is not horrible. Come, Yasa, sit down. I will teach you the Dharma.”

Yasa, now feeling happy and hopeful, took off his golden shoes and went to where the Buddha was sitting. He bowed with respect, and the Buddha taught him about generosity, virtues, the heaven-worlds, the dangers of attachments and the blessings of becoming a monk.

The Buddha saw that Yasa’s mind was ready, eager to learn, and trusting, so he taught him the Four Noble Truths. Yasa then had a pure vision of the Dharma and experienced a deep understanding of how everything arises and ends.

Meanwhile, the mother of Yasa couldn’t find him, so Yasa’s father followed the footprints of Yasa’s golden shoes, which led him to the Deer Park. Seeing Yasa’s father approaching, the Buddha, with his supernatural power, made Yasa invisible to his father.

Yasa’s father asked, “Lord, have you seen Yasa?”

The Buddha responded, “Now, sit down, and perhaps while you are sitting here you may see Yasa sitting here too.”

Yasa’s father, glad to hear this, bowed to the Buddha, who taught him as he had taught his son.

Yasa's father then deeply understood the Dharma, and he had no doubts about the Buddha and Dharma.

He exclaimed, "Magnificent, Lord! The Dharma has been made clear in many ways by the Blessed One! It's like revealing what was hidden, like showing the way to one who is lost, like holding a lamp in the dark for those with eyes to see. I go to the Buddha for refuge and to the Dharma and to the Sangha of monks. Beginning from today, Lord, receive me as your follower who has gone to you for refuge as long as I live."

He was the first person to take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, also known as the Three Jewels or the Triple Gem.

The Buddha knew that while he was teaching the father, Yasa had a deep experience of the Dharma, and that his mind became free of impurities, so he couldn't enjoy life at home anymore. The Buddha made Yasa visible again.

The father then saw his son Yasa sitting there, and said, "Yasa, my son, your mother is sad and upset. Go to your mother and make her happy again."

Yasa looked at the Buddha, who said to the father, "How do you imagine this? If Yasa has understood the Dharma as you have, and if by letting go of attachments his mind is purified, would he be able to go back to the home life and enjoy it as he used to do?"

Yasa's father replied, "No, Lord."

The Buddha said, "But that is what Yasa has done; now he is no longer able to go back to what he has left behind and enjoy pleasures of the home life as he used to do."

The father said, "It is a great achievement for Yasa that through having no attachments his heart is purified. Lord, may you with Yasa as your attendant monk accept today's meal from me."

The Buddha silently accepted the invitation, and Yasa's father went home. Yasa then asked the Buddha,

"Lord, I wish to receive from you the ordination to be a monk."

The Buddha ordained him simply as he did the five ascetics, saying, "Come, monk, the Dharma is well announced. Lead the holy life for the complete ending of suffering."

The Buddha and Yasa, who was now an arahant and a new monk called Venerable Yasa, went to his parents' house for lunch. Yasa's mother and his former wife heard the Buddha teach the Dharma, and, like Yasa and his father, they had a pure vision of the Dharma and experienced a deep understanding of how everything arises and ends. Also like Yasa's father, they took refuge

in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and asked the Buddha to accept them as his followers for the rest of their lives. They were the first women to become followers of the Buddha.

Yasa's friends heard that he had shaved his hair and beard, put on a yellow robe and become a monk. They thought, "This can't be some ordinary dharma, or some typical ordination to be a monk, for Yasa to have done this. It must have been really special."

So, they went to see Venerable Yasa, who took them to see the Buddha and requested him to advise and instruct them. After they heard the Buddha teach, they requested him to ordain them as monks. Hearing the Dharma made their minds free from attachments and impurities, and, like Yasa, they became Buddhist monks and arahants.

The Buddha then addressed the arahants, now a group of sixty monks, saying to them, "Monks, I am free from all shackles, and you too are free from all shackles. Go now and wander for the welfare and happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, and teach the Dharma. Explain a holy life that is totally perfect and pure. There are beings who have only a little dust on their eyes who will be lost if they don't hear the Dharma, and they will understand it."

He meant that the monks, being arahants, were now free from attachments, desires that bind them to an ordinary life of trying to get what they want and avoid what they don't want. He advised them to wander around and teach the Dharma to help others attain happiness, and that there will be some people who have enough wisdom to understand it.

The Buddha told the monks to ordain men who wish to be ordained by having them shave their hair and beard, put on a robe like Buddha's robe, bow to the arahant monk, and then kneel with palms together and say three times, "I go for refuge in the Buddha, I go for refuge in the Dharma, I go for refuge in the Sangha."

While the monks wandered in groups to different villages and towns, the Buddha went to Uruvela where there were three ascetics who were brothers, all three named Kassapa, who taught a total of a thousand students. The three teachers and their students let their hair grow naturally, so they had beards and dreadlocks—long matted hair—which was typical for ascetics, who lived a meditative life in forests in rough conditions with almost no possessions, and didn't need to be bothered with grooming, styling or shaving hair and beards.

The Buddha asked the leader of the three, "Kassapa, if you don't mind, I would like to spend one night in your fire chamber."

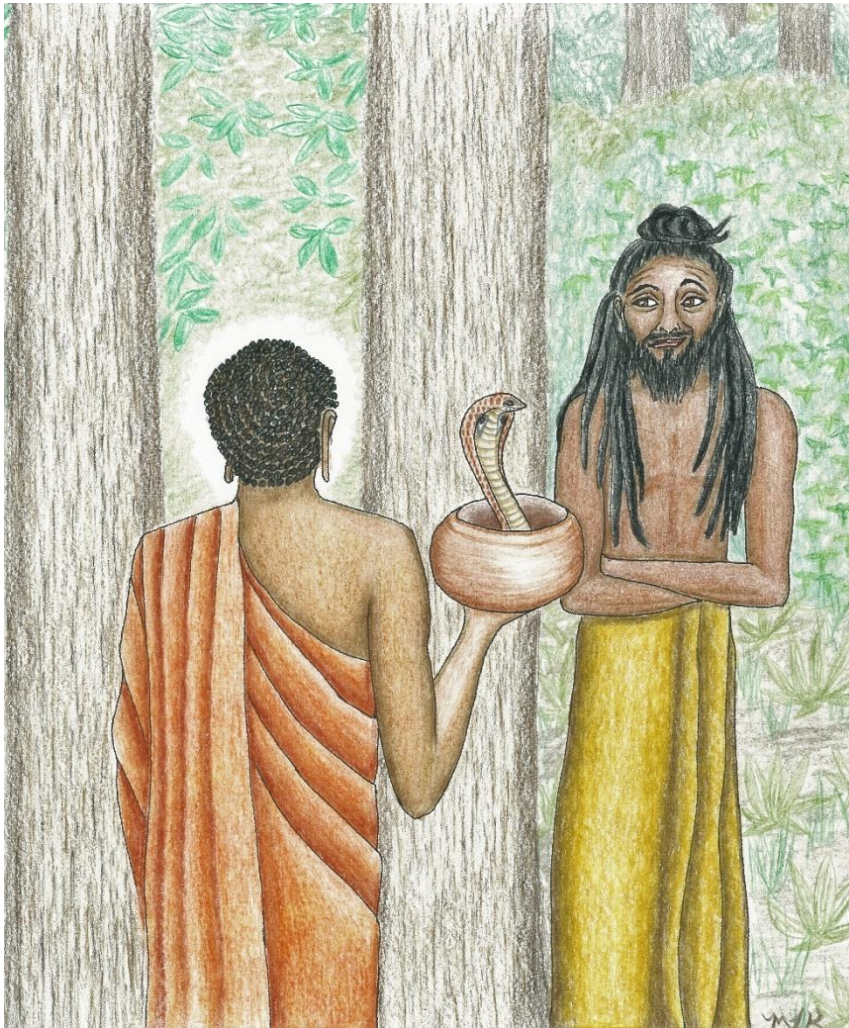
Kassapa said, "I don't mind, great monk, but there is a savage royal naga serpent there. He has supernatural powers. He is terribly poisonous and can kill you."

A naga is a spirit who appears in the form of a snake, and a royal naga is one with great supernatural powers. The Buddha said,

“Maybe he won’t destroy me, Kassapa, so allow me to stay in the fire chamber.”

Kassapa said, “Then stay as long as you like, great monk.”

The Buddha went to the fire chamber and sat down to meditate. When the naga saw the Buddha come in, he was angry, and blew smoke from his mouth. The Buddha, careful not to burn the snake, also blew smoke from his mouth. The naga became more angry, so he blew flames from his mouth. The Buddha, who had control over elements such as water and fire, blew flames from his mouth too, but carefully avoided injuring the naga. The ascetics gathered near the fire chamber as they saw flames and smoke coming from it. They thought, “The great monk, who is so beautiful, is being destroyed by the naga.”



When the sun began to rise, the Buddha put the naga into his bowl and showed him to Kassapa, saying,

“This is your naga, Kassapa. His fire has been countered by fire.”

Kassapa thought, “The great monk is very mighty and powerful since he is able to fight with fire against the fire of the royal naga. But he is not an arahant like me.”

The Buddha then went to stay in the woods nearby. During the night, the four great kings who govern the first level heaven-world, lighting up the forest, went to visit the Buddha and sat like pillars of fire in four corners around him.

In the morning, Kassapa went to call the Buddha for breakfast, saying, “It is time, great monk, the meal is ready. Who were those that came to you in the night?”

The Buddha replied, "They were the Four Great Kings, Kassapa. They came to me to hear the Dharma."

Kassapa thought, "The great monk is very mighty and powerful. But he is not an arahant like me."

The next two nights, Sakka, who was the ruler of the heaven-world of the thirty- three gods, and Brahma Sahampati came to visit the Buddha.

Kassapa saw them, and again he thought, "The great monk is very mighty and powerful. But he is not an arahant like me."

Kassapa had invited many people from surrounding areas for a fire ceremony. He thought, "If the great monk shows some supernatural power or miracle to these people, he will become more famous and my fame will diminish. If only the great monk were not to come tomorrow."

The Buddha heard his thoughts and stayed away.

The next day, Kassapa invited the Buddha to come for breakfast, and asked him why he didn't come yesterday. The Buddha told him that he was aware of Kassapa's thoughts. Kassapa again thought, "The great monk is very mighty and powerful. But he is not an arahant like me."

The Buddha needed to wash a rag, and Sakka, aware of his thoughts, came and scooped out a pond for it to be washed and set down a large stone to scrub it with. A tree spirit, aware that the Buddha was wondering where to hang the rag to dry, bent a branch of the tree for him to hang the rag.

The next morning, when Kassapa announced that breakfast was ready, he saw the pond, stone and bent branch and asked the Buddha about it. The Buddha told him what had happened, and again Kassapa thought, "The great monk is very mighty and powerful. But he is not an arahant like me."

On another day when Kassapa called the Buddha for breakfast, he told Kassapa to go ahead and that he would follow. But when Kassapa arrived at the fire chamber, the Buddha was already sitting there with a rose apple fruit that he had plucked from a tree on his way. Kassapa recognized that the Buddha had some supernatural power to arrive before him, but he kept thinking that the Buddha was not an arahant like him.

One day, Kassapa's students could not split the logs they needed for their fires. They thought it was so strange that it must be due to the Buddha's supernatural power.

The Buddha asked Kassapa, "Should the logs be split, Kassapa?"

When Kassapa agreed they should be split, five hundred logs split instantly. But Kassapa persisted with the same thought.

One day, there was a huge rainstorm and flood, and the area where the Buddha was staying was all under water. Kassapa, hoping the great monk had not been carried away by the water, went by boat with some of his students to the Buddha. But the rain and water, which was pouring all around, had not touched the spot of dry ground where the Buddha was walking. The Buddha rose up into the air and floated over to the boat. Seeing this astounding miracle, Kassapa had the same thought, "The great monk is very mighty and powerful. But he is not an arahant like me."

The Buddha had shown his supernatural powers so Kassapa would see that he was fully enlightened and hear him teach the Dharma. But Kassapa stubbornly couldn't accept that someone else was better, more advanced, than he was.

Finally, the Buddha thought, "This misguided man will go on forever thinking 'But he is not an arahant like me.' Suppose I give him a shock."

So, he said, "Kassapa, you are not an arahant nor are you on the way to becoming one. You are not doing anything that leads to becoming an arahant."

Kassapa's pride and arrogance collapsed. He humbly bowed with his head at the Buddha's feet and asked to receive the ordination to become a monk.

The Buddha replied, "But Kassapa, you are the leader of five hundred ascetics. You must consult them first so they may do as they think appropriate."

When Kassapa told his students he wanted to lead the holy life under the great monk, they said,

"We have long had faith in the great monk. If you lead the holy life under him, all of us will do likewise."

They all shaved their heads and beards and went to be ordained by the Buddha. When the other two Kassapa brothers and their students found out about it, they also shaved their heads and became his student monks. So then the Buddha had more than a thousand student monks.

Questions:

1. What kind of home did Yasa live in before he met the Buddha? (a palace)
2. How did Yasa's father feel about his son becoming a monk? (happy)
3. What quality did the Buddha have in his heart that he was careful not to injure the naga? (kindness, compassion)

4. What did Kassapa think about himself compared to the Buddha when he saw the Buddha's supernatural powers? (he thought he was better than the Buddha; he thought he was an arahant and the Buddha was powerful but not an arahant)
5. Why did the Buddha show his supernatural powers to Kassapa? (so he would see that the Buddha was enlightened)
6. What made Kassapa finally accept that the Buddha was fully enlightened and he was not? (the Buddha told him he was not an arahant and wasn't doing anything to become one)

What the Buddha said:

“Sujīvam ahirikena kākasūrena dhamṣinā,
pakkhandinā pagabbhena saṅkiliṭṭhena jīvitam.”

“Easy is life for the shameless one who is as impudent as a crow, is backbiting and forward, arrogant and corrupt.”

Dhammapada 244 (18:10)

Dharma Discussion - Humility:

Before they met the Buddha, who were Yasa and his family, as seen by their community? Yasa and his family were very wealthy, successful and admired in society. Many people like them—rich, successful and popular—feel satisfied that they have achieved their life's goal, so they have no need to seek peace and happiness by following someone's teachings or going to a spiritual teacher. Even if they did go, they wouldn't feel there is anything important to learn from him.

But Yasa and his family were different. When they heard the Buddha's wisdom, they knew that the Buddha had attained the true goal in life and they had not.

Why were they different from others?

They had open minds—open to listening and learning from others.

They were wise enough to understand the Buddha's teachings.

And they were willing to admit that there was a higher, better goal to be reached and that they had not reached it.

There are two big differences between Yasa's family and other wealthy families.

One is that they had wisdom. They had enough wisdom to recognize the Buddha's wisdom.

The other is that they had humility, in other words, they were humble.

What is humility? What does it mean to be humble?

It's the opposite of arrogance.

Arrogance means showing that you are more important and better than others, in a way that is offensive or annoying to others.

What does arrogance look like? What do people do when they are arrogant?

Arrogance can include showing off, bragging, acting bossy, acting “entitled,” demanding everything to be exactly as you want, expecting others to serve you and do things for you, putting others down with insults or criticism, not accepting the success of others, accusing others of cheating when they win, being inconsiderate, not caring about others, insisting on being first or getting the best without considering others, and having a “me first” attitude.

What does humility look like? What do people do when they are humble?

Humility can include appreciating what others can do, accepting that they may be better than you in some ways, recognizing the contributions, talent and success of others, unselfishly helping and encouraging others to succeed, letting others be first, letting them have the best, being aware of what others might need and helping them, and appreciating what you have without demanding more.

A truly wise person is humble, because he doesn’t have an ego.

He understands the interdependence of everything.

So, he understands the importance of others, and of kindness and compassion.

Therefore, wisdom and humility go together.

A person with humility is open to learning from others, because a humble person can admit that others may know more than they do, or may have more skill or talent.

Yasa and his family were humble, open to learning from the Buddha, so they immediately heard and understood his teachings.

What about Kassapa, was he humble? No, he was arrogant.

He was proud of being an ascetic and a teacher. He thought he was great, that he knew more than the Buddha. He couldn’t accept that the Buddha was better, more spiritually advanced than he was.

An arrogant person can’t learn from others when he thinks he knows it all.

While the Buddha was staying with him, he had a great opportunity to hear the Buddha teach, but because of his arrogance, he missed out on that opportunity for many days, until finally he had humility, and asked to be ordained.

It’s not so easy to have humility when, like Kassapa, many others admire us or when we have a great talent or skill.

Especially when we're young, we're developing many skills, and we're proud of them—we proudly show our parents, teachers and others what we've accomplished. We get attention and rewards when we do well.

We compete in sports, art, dance, or music, and we try to win or do our best.

Is that good for us? Yes! It motivates us to fully develop our talents and skills.

And it's important for developing self-confidence.

Do we have to win or be the best in the group to have self-confidence? No!

We learn to be confident even when we fail, when we lose, when others do better.

What is self-confidence? What does it mean to be confident?

It's a feeling that we are valuable and worthy of respect, regardless of what others might think.

We know we have skills and abilities, and that we can learn and improve. We can accomplish difficult things even if we don't yet know how.

This helps us to respect and appreciate others, and understand how we all help each other, we learn from each other, we're all valuable, we're interdependent.

And this enables us to develop humility.

So, when we are young, we develop our self-confidence, and as we become more self-confident, we develop humility.

How does one develop humility and avoid arrogance?

When someone else is successful, we notice our feelings and how we behave.

Do we have a hard time accepting or respecting their success?

Do we have bad thoughts about the successful person?

Do we think their success was unfair?

Do we speak disrespectfully to them or say negative things about them to others?

Do we blame others for our failure or lack of success?

If so, we may need to work on developing our self-confidence.

Also, when we are successful, we notice how we feel and how we behave.

Do we feel that we are better than everyone else?

If so, we can remember that everyone has their own talents, abilities and skills,

that we all have weaknesses and room for improvement,

that everyone experiences successes and failures in life,

and that we all have good days and bad days.

Remembering who has helped us to be successful, we can be grateful to them.

We can remember that there are many things we still need to learn.

We can remember success is impermanent; everything changes, is impermanent.

We can think about how we have improved, comparing our performance over time, rather than comparing ourselves with others.

We can remember that we learn from our failures, so they are valuable too.

Activity - Attitude Test:

Circle the answer that shows the most humility. Teacher then discusses different answers, explaining why one is humble and how other answers are, or could be, arrogant/competitive/falsely humble, or neutral.

1. When I get an excellent score on a difficult test, I:
 - (a) somehow let other students know my score
 - (b) think about how I have improved my study habits
 - (c) find out what other students' scores were

2. When I get an award, I:
 - (a) think about all the people who helped me and taught me
 - (b) want to tell my friends about it
 - (c) know I deserved it

3. When I win or do well in a competition, I:
 - (a) look forward to the next competition and want to win that, too
 - (b) remember everyone has good days and bad days, we win some and lose some
 - (c) say it was no big deal

4. When I know I am good at doing something, I:
 - (a) keep practicing it so I can improve
 - (b) want to teach it to others
 - (c) am thankful to those who helped me learn and I'm willing to teach it to others

5. When others admire me and like my company, I:
 - (a) think that I am more popular than others
 - (b) try to become more popular
 - (c) know that popularity is impermanent and not as important as good character

6. When someone wins a competition that I thought I would win, I:
 - (a) think about who distracted me or made me perform poorly
 - (b) congratulate the winner and appreciate their excellent performance
 - (c) look forward to practicing more and winning the next competition

7. When someone else gets more appreciation or recognition than I get, I:
 - (a) say something funny so everyone gives me attention instead
 - (b) think they are being unfair
 - (c) think about that person's good qualities and how I can improve

Chapter 13 – Moggallana and Sariputta

After the three Kassapas and their students were ordained as monks by the Buddha, they walked with him on a long journey to the city of Rajagaha, the capital of Magadha, a kingdom in northeast India. The king of Magadha, King Bimbisara, had heard that the Buddha was fully enlightened and had arrived in Rajagaha, so he went along with a huge crowd of 120,000 educated people of his kingdom to visit the Buddha. They were surprised to see the leader of the three Kassapas, who was a well-respected ascetic teacher, together with the Buddha, and they wondered whether the Buddha had become a student of Kassapa or Kassapa had become a student of the Buddha. The Buddha, knowing their thoughts, asked in front of the king and big crowd of people,

“Kassapa, how did you come to leave fire-worshipping?”

Venerable Kassapa, like many other holy men in India, had done fire ceremonies, offering various substances and items into a fire, sacrificing them, meaning giving them up, as a spiritual practice before he became a Buddhist monk.

He replied, “When we offer sacrifices into fire, we seek rewards of beautiful things to see and hear in heaven-worlds. I saw that these are not pure things to seek, so fire-worship and sacrifice didn’t give me joy anymore.”

The Buddha asked further, “But if you are no longer delighted in beautiful things to see, hear and taste, then what delights you here in this world?”

Venerable Kassapa replied, “I saw the state of peace, not in this world, where there is no owning things, no sense of me and others, and so worship and sacrifice gave me no more joy.”

Then Venerable Kassapa got up and bowed to the Buddha’s feet, saying, “Lord, the Buddha is my guide; I am a student.”

The Buddha then gave a talk on the Dharma to the huge crowd. Most of them, including the king, had a vision and deep understanding of the Dharma, and all became the Buddha’s followers. The king, full of joy from hearing and understanding the Dharma, invited the Buddha and the thousand monks with him for a meal. Later, after the meal, the king sat near the Buddha and thought,

“Where could the Buddha live that isn’t too far from the town nor too close, accessible to people who want to see him, but free of traffic and quiet at night, undisturbed by voices, where one can stay hidden from people, good for meditation retreat? This park of ours, the Bamboo Grove, has all these qualities. Maybe I should offer the Bamboo Grove park to the Buddha and his Sangha of monks.” He then offered it to the Buddha, and it became the first Buddhist monastery, a place for the Buddha and his monks to live in buildings, rather than camping.

There was another group of holy men staying in Rajagaha—Sanjaya, a well-known teacher with his 250 students. They were wanderers, traveling around to different towns and places without staying at any place very long. Sanjaya had two excellent students who were close friends: Sariputta, who had golden color skin, and Moggallana, who had dark skin. They were highly respected by the other students, and often taught and advised them. Sariputta and Moggallana had made a promise to each other that the first one to find the way to end the cycle of birth and death would tell the other.

One morning, Venerable Assaji went into Rajagaha to receive food. He was one of the five ascetics who had lived in the forest with the Buddha for six years practicing extreme asceticism, and who had become one of the first five monks ordained by the Buddha. He walked very gracefully and confidently, with his eyes looking down, a few feet ahead of him. Seeing him for the first time, Sariputta felt there was something very special about him, and thought,

“There are arahants in the world, and this monk must be one of them. I should ask him who his teacher is.”

After Venerable Assaji gathered his food, Sariputta went up to him and greeted him politely. Then Sariputta said,

“Friend, you look serene and the color of your skin is clear and bright. Under whom have you become a monk? Who is your teacher? Whose Dharma have you learned?”

Venerable Assaji replied, “There is the great monk, friend, the son of the Sakyans, who was from the Sakyan clan. I became a monk under that lord. He is my teacher, and it is his Dharma that I learn.”

Sariputta asked, “But what does your teacher say, what does he teach?”

Venerable Assaji humbly responded, “I have only recently become a monk, friend, I have only just come to the Dharma. I cannot teach you the Dharma in detail. But I will tell you briefly its meaning.”

Sariputta said, “So be it, friend. Say as much or as little as you like. Tell me just the meaning now. I need no more than the meaning; I don’t yet need the details.”

Venerable Assaji said, “All things arise from causes. Those causes have been taught by the Buddha. All things come to an end; this also has been taught by the Great Monk.”

Hearing this statement, Sariputta had a pure vision of the Dharma, deeply understanding the arising of things and the ending of things. He attained the first level of enlightenment, so he would become an arahant within no more than seven future lives.

Sariputta went to his friend Moggallana, who said, “You look serene, friend, and the color of your skin is clear and bright. Is it possible that you found the way to end the cycle of birth and death?”

Sariputta responded, “Yes, friend, I have found it.”

Moggallana asked, “But how did you find it, friend?”

Sariputta told him that he had met Venerable Assaji, and the words Venerable Assaji spoke about the Buddha’s teachings.

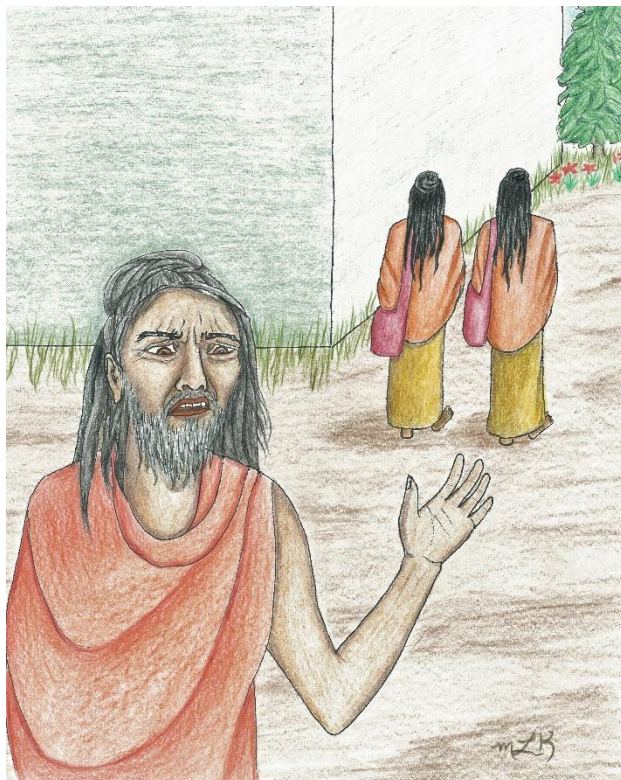
Hearing that short statement of the Buddha’s teachings, Moggallana then also had a pure vision of the Dharma, deeply understanding the arising of things and the ending of things. Like Sariputta, he attained the first level of enlightenment.

Then Moggallana said, “Friend, let’s go to the Buddha. The Buddha is our teacher.”

Sariputta responded, “But friend, these 250 students are living here, depending on us, looking up to us. We should tell them first, and they will do as they like.”

They told the students, “Friends, we are going to the Buddha. The Buddha is our teacher.”

The students said, “We live depending on you, looking up to you. If you go to lead the holy life under the Great Monk, then we too will do the same.”



So, Sariputta and Moggallana went to Sanjaya and told him what they were going to do.

Sanjaya said, “Friends, don’t go, let us three guide this community together.”

According to the tradition of asking or requesting permission three times, Sariputta and Moggallana repeated three times their intention to go to the Buddha, and each time Sanjaya responded the same way, insisting they stay. But Sariputta and Moggallana had decided to go to the Buddha, so they went with the 250 students to the Bamboo Grove where the Buddha and his Sangha were staying.

Sanjaya was so upset that hot blood gushed from his mouth.

The Buddha saw Sariputta and Moggallana coming in the distance, and told his monks,

“Here come these two friends, Kolita and Upatissa. These two will be my main students, an auspicious pair.”

Kolita is the name of Moggallana when he was younger, and Upatissa is the name of Sariputta when he was younger. The word “auspicious” means fortunate, an indication of future success.

When they arrived, Sariputta and Moggallana bowed to the Buddha and asked to be ordained as monks. The Buddha immediately ordained them by saying,

“Come, monks, the Dharma is well announced; lead the holy life for the complete end of suffering.”

A week after becoming a Buddhist monk, Moggallana became an arahant, and a week after that, Sariputta became an arahant.

By that time, many well-known men in the kingdom of Magadha had become Buddhist monks. Some people did not like the men to leave their families. They thought that Buddha was causing women to have no children and to have no husbands because the men had become monks. They thought he was destroying families. When they saw Buddhist monks, to make them feel guilty about stealing away their men, they said loudly and mockingly,

“Gautama the monk came to Magadha; he led away all of Sanjaya’s men; whom will he lead away today?”

When the monks told the Buddha about it, he said,

“This will not last long, it will only last seven days. At the end of seven days it will go away. So when people mock you with those words, you can correct them in return with these words: ‘Those who lead by Dharma are great heroes and Perfect Ones; and when they lead by Dharma, where is the reason for jealousy?’”

When the people spoke negatively to the monks again, the monks said what the Buddha told them to say. Then the people began to think, “The monks lead by Dharma, it seems, not against Dharma.”

After seven days, they stopped making negative comments to the monks.

Questions:

1. What kind of ceremonies did Kassapa give up when he became a monk? (fire ceremonies)
2. What is a monastery? (a place with buildings where monks live)
3. What did Sariputta notice about Venerable Assaji? (he walked gracefully, looking down a few feet ahead, and his skin looked clear and bright)
4. What happened when Sariputta heard Venerable Assaji speak a little of the Buddha's teaching? (he reached the first level of enlightenment)
5. As Moggallana and Sariputta approached the Buddha, what did he say will become? (his main students)
6. Why did people speak in a negative way to the monks? (they thought the Buddha was stealing their men away, destroying their families)

What the Buddha said:

“Paravajjānupassissa, niccaṃ ujjhānasaññino, āsavā tassa vaḍḍhanti, ārā so āsavakkhayā.”
“He who seeks another person's faults, who is ever critical of others - his pain grows. He is far from the destruction of the pain.”

Dhammapada 253 (18:19)

Dharma Discussion - Jealousy:

How do you think Sanjaya felt when his precious students, including the wonderful Sariputta and Moggallana, left him?

Disappointed, shocked, sad, rejected, angry.

He also felt jealous of the Buddha; otherwise, he would have gone with his students to the Buddha.

The monks had dedicated their lives to being excellent students of the Buddha.

Can you imagine they may have felt when the Buddha announced that Sariputta and Moggallana, who hadn't even arrived yet, would be his main students, his best students?

They may have thought that they weren't good enough, weren't worth much.

They may have felt jealous of Sariputta and Moggallana, or jealous of the attention, success and fame they would get.

Who else was jealous in the story? People in the town.

The Buddha told the monks to ask the people who were making negative comments, “where is the reason for jealousy?”

Why were they jealous?

They felt that the Buddha had stolen their men away, so they were jealous of him.

What does jealousy mean, exactly?

Jealousy and envy mean almost the same thing, but there is a little difference.

Envy means the uncomfortable feeling of wanting what someone else has.

For example, wanting the success or attention that someone else is getting, or a feeling of “why does he get to have it, why can’t I have it?”

Jealousy is a more painful emotion.

It means the negative feeling toward a person who has something you want very much, or who got something you thought you deserved or you thought was yours.

It includes the negative feeling toward a rival who might, or already did, take a friend away from you.

It includes the feeling when others admire someone and ignore you.

When you feel jealous of someone, you resent them; you might hate to see them.

So, jealousy involves a feeling of not having what someone else has, or of not being good enough, plus an angry or hateful feeling toward the other person.

Have you ever experienced someone stealing your friend away?

Or someone getting something you really wanted to have?

Or someone getting a reward or admiration you thought you deserved instead?

Or others giving someone a lot of attention and ignoring you?

Or a parent treating a brother or sister better than they treat you?

Jealousy can be an extremely powerful and painful emotion we all experience.

Sanjaya was so upset losing his students that blood gushed from his mouth.

People in the town were so upset that they criticized the Buddha to his monks.

Jealousy makes us have very critical, negative or hateful thoughts about the other person every time we think of them.

It might make us criticize them, say bad things about them, ridicule or insult them, or do something to hurt them or embarrass them.

We might think that by doing that, others will see their faults, so we appear better than them.

But, focusing on them poisons our mind with negativity, so it increases our pain and we look and feel more jealous, stressed or angry.

How can we calm the painful feelings of jealousy? Here are some ideas:

1. Be mindful of your thoughts and feelings, and perhaps write them down.

When you think of the person toward whom you are feeling jealous, try to notice exactly what thoughts and feelings, fears or worries you are having. Just observe them without judging whether they are good or bad. Are you having memories of what they said, what they did? Are you thinking about their bad qualities? Are you imagining what you would say to them? Are

you wishing they would disappear, move away, or face difficulties? Do you feel rejected, unworthy, or angry? Writing down your thoughts and feelings can help relieve stress.

2. Remember the first Noble Truth—everyone experiences suffering.

The person toward whom you feel jealous experiences suffering like you do.

Just because they have what you want doesn't mean they're happier or always will be happier than you.

If you were to have what that person has—everything that person has, including all their suffering and negative karmas—would you want to be that person? No! We have no idea how much suffering they have and will have in their future.

We are creating merits, and they may not have as much merit as we do.

So, we can see how absurd it is to want what that person has.

Also, being aware of their suffering, we can try to feel compassion for them.

3. Remember karma—we get what our karma allows us to have. Even if we think they don't deserve it, that person has the good karma to have the good things they have; so, let them enjoy it. Perhaps they will learn something from it and eventually become a kinder person.

4. Remember that friends are temporary. If a person steals your friend away, then your friend wasn't a very kind, loyal person, and therefore wasn't a very good friend. Now it's time to find a better friend. Until you find one, it might feel unpleasant to be alone. But you, as a Dharma student, are a more valuable friend than someone who isn't loyal to you. This helps maintain your self-confidence.

5. See the virtues. Try to think of something positive about the person toward whom you feel jealous—any good qualities, any pleasant words, any acts of kindness. This helps us reduce our critical thoughts about them.

6. Practice lovingkindness. Send good wishes to the person toward whom you feel jealous. Wish them peace, happiness, and freedom from suffering. Even if we can't stand thinking about a person, even if we can't find anything positive about them, we can wish that they learn the Dharma and find happiness in practicing it.

By following these ideas, we can change our painful thoughts to uplifting, healing thoughts, which not only makes us feel better, but also creates merit and helps us develop a good habit of transforming negative thoughts into positive ones.

Activity:

Draw a monster representing our jealousy. Then draw large arrows aimed at the jealousy monster. Label the arrows with methods we can use to calm our jealousy, such as the methods listed above.

Chapter 14 – Return to Kapilavatthu

Several months after the Buddha became enlightened, his father, King Suddhōdana heard that his son, now the Buddha, was in Rajagaha. He sent a messenger to persuade his son to come back home to Kapilavatthu for a visit.

However, soon after the messenger arrived and saw the Buddha, he wanted to stay with the Buddha and become a monk. Then, after he was ordained as a monk, he gave the Buddha the message inviting him to come to Kapilavatthu. The Buddha agreed to make the long journey.

For two months, the Buddha traveled along with a big group of monks, stopping here and there along the way, until they finally arrived in Kapilavatthu.

The Sakya clan, to which the Buddha's family belonged, were known to be proud of their status and wealth, so when the Buddha arrived with his big crowd of monks, the Sakyans weren't interested in making offerings to any holy men or showing respect by greeting them and bowing to them.

The Buddha wanted the people to see that he wasn't an ordinary holy man, but that he indeed was fully enlightened. So, in front of a crowd of people, he caused both fire and water to spray out at the same time from his arms and legs! This miracle shocked and amazed the crowd of people and they knew this was no ordinary holy man.

Then he gave a Dharma talk, in which he told a story about his past life when he was a generous prince who ended up giving away everything he had. After seeing the Buddha perform the miracle and teach the Dharma, the Sakyans then were convinced that he was indeed enlightened.

During their stay in Kapilavatthu, the Buddha and his monks went as usual to receive food from people in the town. They walked in small groups to a house and stood silently at the door holding their bowls for people to put food in them.

When King Suddhōdana heard about it, he was shocked. Why would his son, from a royal family, beg for food? He went to the Buddha and said,

“Why do you disgrace me, son? Why are you begging for food? Why don't you take food in the palace?”

The Buddha explained, “I am not putting you to shame. This is our tradition.”

The king said, “What do you mean, ‘our tradition’? No one in our family had to beg for food.”

The Buddha replied, “That is not the tradition of the royal family. It is the tradition of the buddhas. All former buddhas lived by receiving food like this.”

King Suddhōdana invited him to the palace for a meal. After the meal, the Buddha told a story of one of his past lives, in which his parents in that life were reborn to be his parents in this life also.

Hearing his son teaching, King Suddhōdana attained the third level of enlightenment, so he would never have to take another birth as a human before becoming an arahant, one who is free from all suffering and rebirth. His wife, Queen Mahapajāpati, the sister of the Buddha's mother, attained the first level of enlightenment, so she would have at most only seven lives in a heaven-world or as a human before becoming an arahant.

At the king's palace, all the Buddha's relatives and friends came to see him except Yashodhara, who was in her room. She was thinking, "He is now a buddha. Should I go to him? If I have any virtues, then he will come here and I will show him my reverence."

The Buddha asked where Yashodhara was and gave his bowl to the king, who told him that she was in her room. The Buddha went to her room with the king, Venerable Sariputta and Venerable Moggallana.

He told them quietly, "Let her respect me as she likes. Say nothing."

Yashodhara went to him and bowed, holding his feet and placing her head on his feet, according to the tradition of respecting a holy man with devotion. The Buddha kept quiet. Then she sat down.

The king told his son, "When she heard that you wore orange robes, took only one meal per day, and avoided high seats, garlands and perfumes, she did the same. When relatives offered to support her, she would not even look at anyone, so virtuous was my daughter-in-law."

The Buddha said, "Not only in this life, but in a past life, she protected me and was devoted and faithful to me," and he told the story of that past life.

Queen Mahapajāpati, the Buddha's aunt, had one son, who also was the Buddha's half-brother, named Nanda. On the day that the Buddha was visiting, the people in the palace were enjoying a celebration of the future marriage of Nanda, and preparing for the wedding which was coming soon. At the end of the visit, when the Buddha was preparing to go back to the park where he was staying, he gave his bowl to Nanda to hold.

The Buddha walked out the door of the palace. Nanda didn't know what to do with the bowl, so he just followed the Buddha, waiting for him to take back his bowl. As the Buddha continued walking, Nanda followed, expecting that he would take back the bowl at any moment and then Nanda could go back to the palace.

The princess who was soon to become Nanda's wife saw him leaving, and was anxious for him to be back at the palace in plenty of time for the wedding.

She called out to him, "Come back soon, prince!"

Nanda kept following the Buddha, holding the bowl. When the Buddha arrived at the park where the monks were staying, he asked Nanda,

"Would you like to leave the householder's life and become a monk?"

Nanda was very much looking forward to his marriage, but he greatly admired the Buddha and didn't want to be disrespectful by refusing the Buddha's offer. So, he agreed to become a monk. He shaved his hair and beard and put on an orange robe. The Buddha ordained him, and he joined the other monks.

On the seventh day after his arrival, the Buddha went again to his father's palace for lunch. Prince Rahula, the son of the Buddha and Yashodhara, was now seven years old. He had never before seen his father. Yashodhara pointed out the Buddha to Rahula. As a wealthy family's son, it would be appropriate for Rahula to ask his father for his inheritance before he leaves the family. Yashodhara said,

"That is your father, Rahula. Go and ask for your inheritance, the property and wealth which a father gives to his son."

Prince Rahula walked up to the Buddha and said, "Even your shadow is pleasing to me, monk."

The Buddha got up from his seat and walked away, so Prince Rahula followed him and, following his mother's instructions, said,

"Give me my inheritance, monk."

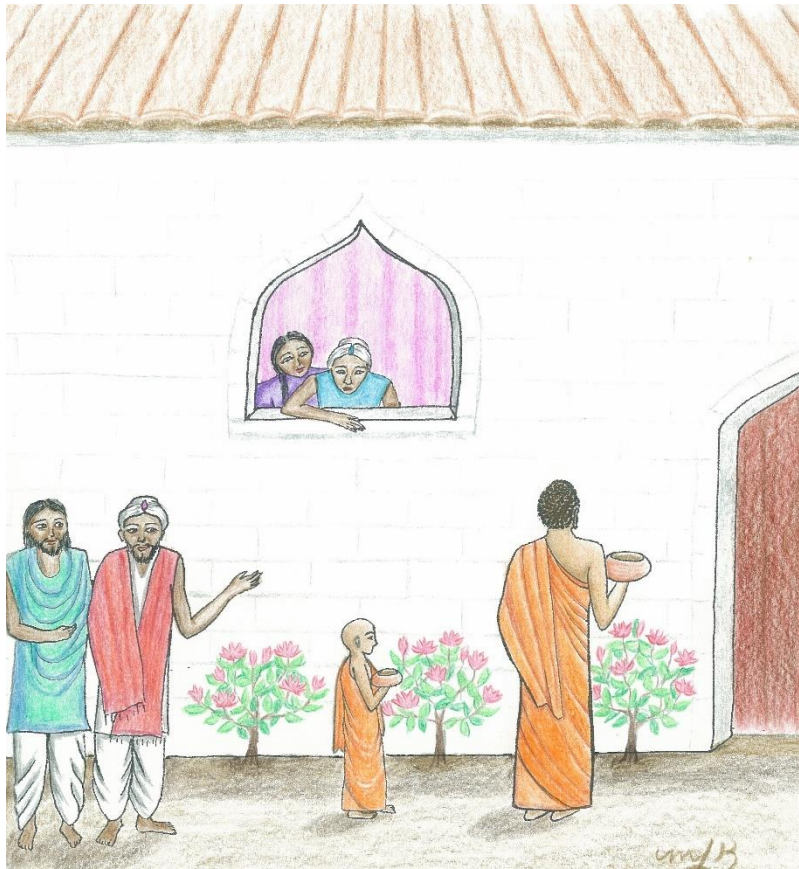
Rahula asked again, and the third time he asked, the Buddha said,

"I will give you the greatest wealth. Money is not the greatest wealth. Truth is the greatest wealth. Being ordained as a monk you can find the Truth."

The Buddha then asked Venerable Sariputta to ordain little Prince Rahula to be a monk.

Sariputta asked, "How am I to give Prince Rahula the ordination, Lord?"

The Buddha gave a talk on the Dharma to the monks, instructing them how to perform ordination: first, the man's hair and beard are shaven and he puts on an orange robe. Then, he bows to the monk and kneels, puts his palms together and takes refuge three times in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.



Rahula's hair was shaved, and a robe was draped on his small body. He took refuge, and then followed the instructions of the Buddha and the other monks.

He dutifully followed them around, including when they went from house to house to receive food.

King Suddhōdana, however, was feeling very distressed. He went to the Buddha and said,

"I ask one favor of the Buddha."

He told the Buddha, "Lord, I suffered pain when you left to become a monk. Then there was Nanda. But Rahula is too much. Love for our children, separation from our children, Lord, cuts like a knife deep into

the skin and even into our bones. Lord, it would be good if the monks did not ordain children without the parents' consent."

The Buddha gave a talk on the Dharma his father and then to the monks, instructing the monks that from this time on, they must not ordain children without their parents' consent. This was how the Buddha made rules for the monks—when a complaint or problem arose that needed a solution, then he announced a new rule.

Questions:

1. Why did the Buddha make fire and water pour out from his arms and legs? (so the people of Kapilavatthu would see that he was fully enlightened)
2. Why was the king shocked when the Buddha went to houses to receive food? (because people in the royal family would never beg for food)
3. What did the king tell the Buddha that Yashodhara did when she heard that the Buddha wore orange robes, took only one meal per day, and avoided high seats, garlands and perfumes? (she did the same)

4. How old was Rahula when he became a monk? (seven years old)
5. What did the Buddha say is not the greatest wealth, as he taught his son, Rahula? (money)
6. What did the Buddha say is the greatest wealth? (the Truth)

What the Buddha said:

“Asārē sāramatinō sārē ca asāradassinō micchā-saṅkappagōcarā tē sāram na adhigacchanti. Sāram sārātō ca asaram āsaratō ca ñatvā sammā saṅkappa gōcarā tē saram adhigacchanti.”

“Those who mistake the unessential to be essential, and the essential to be unessential, dwelling in wrong thoughts, never arrive at the essential.

Those who know the essential to be essential, and the unessential to be unessential, dwelling in right thoughts, do arrive at the essential.”

Dhammapada 12, 13 (1:12, 13)

Dharma Discussion - Traditions:

King Suddhōdana was upset because his son was going from house to house to receive food, which was totally inappropriate—shameful, a disgrace—for a person of a royal family. The Buddha explained that it was the tradition of the buddhas, not the tradition of the royal family, that he was following.

Yashodhara was following a tradition of Indian culture to bow to the feet of a holy man, teacher or elder to express devotion when she bowed to the Buddha’s feet. And she followed the tradition of Buddhist monks by wearing orange robes, eating only one meal per day, not sitting in high seats, and not wearing jewelry, flower garlands or perfumes.

What does “tradition” mean?

It means special activities, practices, beliefs and ways of doing things that a group of people do regularly over many years.

Can you think of any tradition that your family has?

There are different types of traditions: national, cultural, religious, local and family traditions.

For example, there are national traditions on holidays such as Independence Day, celebrated by going to a picnic or parade, watching fireworks, flying kites, or playing certain games.

Cultural traditions include wearing the clothes and presenting the foods, art, music and dances from long ago in one’s culture—one’s homeland or region.

Religious traditions include ways of celebrating religious holidays, conducting religious ceremonies, and doing prayers.

Many people have family traditions, such as going to a certain place every summer, or relatives gathering together on a certain time of the year, or a special activity or food they enjoy together as a family on certain occasions.

There are local or community traditions such as county fairs or town festivals.

Why do we have traditions? Why are they important?

They bring people together, remind them of their history, give a sense of identity, and increase pride in culture or community.

They give people a sense of belonging to the group, making them feel closer, more friendly and harmonious with each other.

What are some Buddhist traditions that your family follows?

Some families meditate, chant verses or say prayers together at certain times.

Some make offerings such as flowers, candles and incense at a shrine or altar.

Some participate in Buddhist ceremonies or programs at a temple.

Some prepare and offer food and other things to monks.

Some wear white or other traditional clothing when they go to a temple.

Some participate in memorial ceremonies for loved ones who passed away.

Why are Buddhist traditions important for us? They are reminders.

What do they remind us of? The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

They remind us to keep our mind focused on good thoughts, which lead to kinder words and actions, which lead to good character and good habits.

They remind us that we belong to our local Buddhist community, and that we belong to a huge community of millions of Buddhists around the world.

They remind us of making and offering merit, so we and others benefit from our good actions.

And, most importantly, they remind us to learn and practice the Dharma.

Some people feel uncomfortable participating in Buddhist traditions when their friends don't participate.

They want to be modern, fit in with their friends, and make their own decisions about participating rather than just following along with their parents.

It's natural to want to fit in with friends, to feel you belong to a group of friends, and to make decisions independent from your parents.

But, should we make decisions based on what our friends think and do?

No. It's better to think for ourselves, considering what is best for us overall.

Let's consider what we get from spending more time with our friends and compare it with what we get from participating in Buddhist traditions.

What good do we get by choosing to spend a few hours with friends?

We enjoy some fun and entertaining activities during those hours with them.

And what benefits do we get by choosing to participate in Buddhist traditions with our family, rather than spending those hours with our friends?

We make merit—which definitely makes our future better and protects us.

We learn and practice Buddhist chants, prayers, participating in ceremonies, and meditation, which become good habits, bringing us more and more merit.

We might find a new friend or enjoy seeing an old friend at the Buddhist event.

We set a good example to other kids, and encourage other young people to attend more Buddhist events when they see us participating.

Learning Buddhist traditions now helps us connect with Buddhist communities in the future, which we can join and belong to anytime for the rest of our lives.

We're more likely to find a friend who is genuinely kind, caring and loyal to us in the Buddhist community than among people who don't know about the Dharma.

We join the millions of Buddhists who support the Dharma and Sangha to ensure they remain available for future generations.

When we're thinking about whether to join in with Buddhist traditions, we can remember the examples of Buddha and Yashodhara.

How do you think the Buddha felt when he went to houses for donations of food, which absolutely didn't fit in with his family and childhood friends?

He was not at all uncomfortable or embarrassed. He had the courage to show others the tradition of the buddhas, which was far more noble and admirable than seeking wealth and power as a king.

How do you think Yashodhara felt, living in a palace, but wearing orange robes, eating once per day, and not wearing jewelry or perfumes, not at all fitting in with her friends? She knew it was more important to be dedicated to Buddhist practice and attain wisdom than live like her friends, no matter what they think.

Activity:

In your bedroom, create a small shrine, or add to one you already have. To create one, clean off a space on a small table, shelf, or dresser, and remove any clutter in the area. Put a picture or statue of the Buddha in the middle of the space. You can put a Dharma book on one side of the Buddha, and a picture of a stupa on the other side to represent the body, speech and mind of the Buddha. Or you can put a bodhi leaf or picture of a bodhi tree on the shrine to represent enlightenment. You can add a battery-operated candle, incense sticks, flowers, or other traditional Buddhist decorations. You can place a cushion or folded blanket on the floor for you to sit in front of the shrine.

Chant or say prayers and meditate daily at your shrine, following the tradition of Buddhists all over the world!

Chapter 15 – Bhaddiya the Happy Monk

After the Buddha visited Kapilavatthu, many well-known princes of the Sakya clan had become Buddhist monks. But two young Sakyan princes who were brothers—Mahanama and Anuruddha—had not. Anuruddha had three palaces of his own—one for summer, one for the rainy season and one for the winter. He enjoyed the entertainment of musicians every evening for four months each year while he stayed in his rainy season palace.

One day, Mahanama was thinking, “Many well-known Sakyan princes have become monks with the Buddha as their teacher. But no one in our family has gone from the household life into homelessness as a monk. What if I become a monk, or Anuruddha?”

He went to Anuruddha and said, “Many Sakyan princes have been ordained as monks by the Buddha, but no one in our family has. What if we become monks?”

Anuruddha replied, “But I have been brought up with so many comforts and luxuries. I can’t go from the home life into homelessness. You go and become a monk.”

Mahanama said, “Okay, Anuruddha, let me tell you about household life. First, a field must be ploughed, then the seeds must be planted in it, then water must be channeled to it, and the extra water must be drained away, and then the weeds must be pulled out. Then the crop must be cut and gathered, then it must be stacked, then threshed, then the straw must be removed, then the dust removed, then it must be sifted, then it must be stored away. When that is done, it must all be done again the next year, and the year after. The work is never finished; there is no end to the work.”

Anuruddha said, “Then when will there be an end to the work? When do we have the time to relax and enjoy ourselves?”

Mahanama said, “Anuruddha, the work never finishes. There is no end to the work. Our father and our grandfather both died while their work was unfinished. So now you can experience this household life. I’m going to become a monk.”

So, Mahanama went to stay with the Buddha. Meanwhile, Anuruddha went to his mother and told her,

“Mother, I want to become a monk. Please give me your permission.”

His mother responded, “You two sons of mine are so dear and precious to me. If you were to die, I would lose you but I wouldn’t be able to do anything about it. But why should I give you my permission to go from the household life into homelessness while you’re still living?”

He asked a second and third time, and then she said, “My dear Anuruddha, if Bhaddiya the royal Sakyan becomes a monk, then you may do so too.”

She said that because she knew that Bhaddiya, who was the governor of the Sakyans and a friend of Anuruddha, would not want to become a monk.

Anuruddha went to visit Bhaddiya, and said to him, “I can only become a monk if you become a monk also.”

Bhaddiya responded, “If your choice to become a monk depends on mine, then let it no longer depend on mine. You and I will . . . well, you go become a monk when you like.”

Anuruddha pleaded, “Come, let’s both go away from the householder’s life and become monks.”

Bhaddiya stubbornly said, “I can’t. I will do anything else for you that I can, but I can’t do that. You go become a monk.”

Anuruddha told him what his mother said, and again pleaded, “Come, let’s both become monks.”

At that time, people spoke the truth and kept their word. They wouldn’t promise something and then not do it. Bhaddiya told him,

“Wait seven years. At the end of seven years both of us shall become monks.”

Anuruddha said, “Seven years is too long, I can’t wait seven years.”

Bhaddiya suggested six years, then five years, four years, three years, two years, one year, seven months, two months, one month, and then two weeks, but Anuruddha would not wait that long. Then Bhaddiya said,

“Wait seven days. At the end of seven days, both of us shall become monks. And so I can hand over the kingdom to my children and my brothers.”

Satisfied, Anuruddha replied, “Seven days is not too long; I shall wait for you.”

On the seventh day, two cousins of the Buddha named Ananda and Devadatta, two other princes, and Upāli the barber went along with Anuruddha and Bhaddiya to become monks. They traveled with an army for protection as usual, as if they were traveling to the parade ground at the park.

After traveling a little while, they told the army to go back home, and then went some distance alone. The princes then removed their golden jewelry and royal outer clothing and rolled it up in a cloak. Knowing that Upāli could sell it to get food and whatever he needed, they gave it to him, saying,

“Upāli, you had better go back. This is enough in this bundle for you to live on.”

Upāli started going back home. He thought,

“These Sakyans are fierce. Now they might even have me put me to death for helping the princes escape to become monks. So these Sakyan princes are going to become monks, but how about me?”

He opened the bundle and hung the things in it on a tree, saying. “Let him who sees these take them as a gift.”

The princes, seeing him coming back, called out, “Why have you returned?”

After explaining his fear of being killed, he said, “So, I have come back again.”

The princes agreed with Upāli, saying “You did well not to go home, Upāli, for the Sakyans are fierce. It’s true, they might even have put you to death for helping us become monks.”

The princes together with Upāli the barber went to the Buddha, and bowed to him. One of the princes said,

“We are Sakyans, proud of our wealth and status. Upāli the barber has taken care of us for a long time. Let him be ordained as a monk first so that we can bow to him, giving him respect, reverence and honor. This way our Sakyan pride will be humbled in us Sakyans.”

So, the Buddha ordained Upāli, and the princes bowed with great respect, reverence and honor to Venerable Upāli. Next, the Buddha ordained the princes.

During the rainy season, the Buddha instructed the monks in the Dharma and meditation, and they practiced intensely every day.

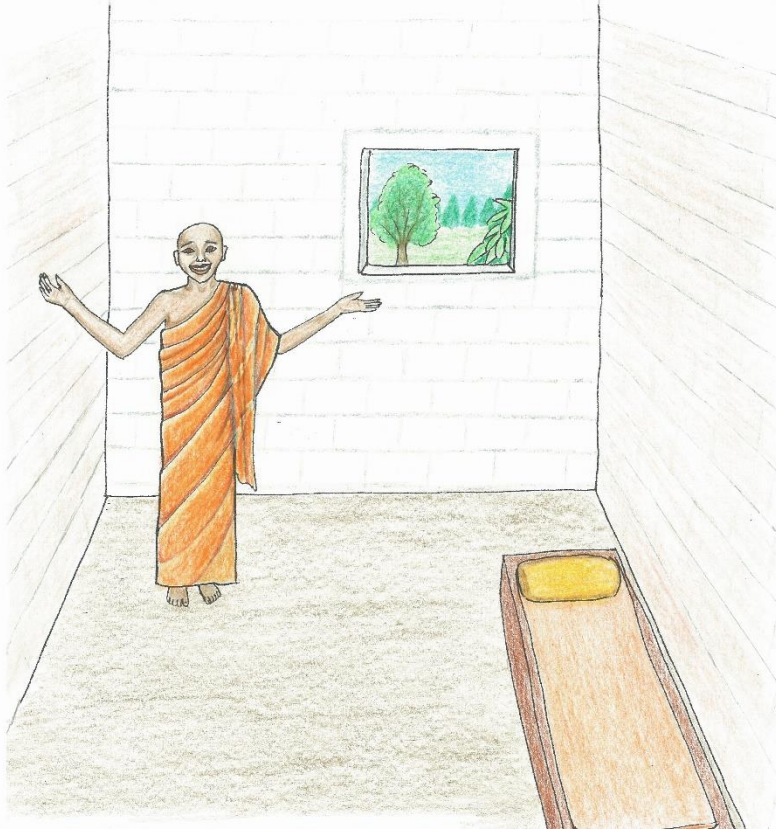
Eventually, Venerable Bhaddiya gained the three wisdoms of ability to remember his past lives, ability to see the futures of others according to their karma, and purity of the mind.

Venerable Anuruddha also got the ability to see the futures of others according to their karma.

Venerable Ananda attained the first level of enlightenment, so he would become an arahant within seven lifetimes.

And Venerable Devadatta got some supernatural powers.

But Venerable Bhaddiya started doing something very peculiar. Whenever he went into the forest, under a tree or in an empty room, he constantly exclaimed,



“Oh, happiness! Oh happiness!”

Several monks thought that behavior was so strange that they went to the Buddha and told him about it. They suggested,

“There seems no doubt, Lord, that the Venerable Bhaddiya is unsatisfied with the monk’s life. Or he is remembering his former position as a governor.”

The Buddha requested Venerable Bhaddiya to come to him, and asked whether it was true that he kept saying, “Oh, happiness” whenever he went into a forest, went under a tree, or into an empty room.

“It is true, Lord,” Venerable Bhaddiya replied.

“But, Bhaddiya, what good do you see in doing this?” the Buddha asked.

Venerable Bhaddiya said, “Before, Lord, when I had royal status, there was a guard both inside and outside of the palace, and also both inside and outside the city, and in addition, both inside and outside the district. Even though I was so well guarded and protected, I was afraid, anxious, suspicious and worried. But now, Lord, when I go to the forest or under a tree or to an empty room, I don’t feel afraid, anxious, suspicious and worried at all! I live relaxed, in a quiet environment, just dependent on the food and things that others give us, with my mind like a wild deer. This is the good I see in doing this.”

The Buddha knew exactly what he meant and said, “Whoever has no conflict in his mind, will be fearless, blissful, free from sorrow, as glorious as any deity in the heaven-worlds.”

Sometime later, another monk behaved in a strange way. Venerable Nanda, the half-brother of the Buddha who was about to be married when he became a monk, seemed to be trying to look especially elegant. He ironed his robes and painted along the edge of his eyelids with a bit of black powder made from ashes. And he was using a shiny, glazed bowl, which looked beautiful compared to the simple clay bowls the other monks had. He went to see the Buddha, who told him,

“Nanda, it’s not proper that you—a man of the Sakya clan who out of dedication to the Dharma has left the household life to become a monk—should put on ironed robes, paint your eyes, and take a glazed bowl. What is proper for you now is to live in the forest, eat only food that is received from begging, wear robes made of thrown-away rags. and live without attachment to desires.”

With that instruction, Venerable Nanda could no longer live in a monastery or other building, eat at people’s homes, or wear robes made from new cloth. With this new way of life, he could learn not to be attached to luxuries and other desires.

Questions:

1. Why didn’t Anuruddha want to become a monk at first? (he had so many comforts and luxuries)
2. What did Mahanama tell him that made him decide to become a monk? (Mahanama explained how the work of a householder, growing crops, never ends)
3. What was Bhaddiya’s job before he became a monk? (he was a governor)
4. Why did the Sakyan princes want Upāli to be ordained first? (they wanted to bow to him with respect to get rid of their pride in their wealth and status)
5. What negative feelings or emotions did Venerable Bhaddiya no longer have when he was a monk? (he no longer felt afraid, anxious, suspicious and worried)
6. How did the Buddha instruct Venerable Nanda to live so he could learn not to be attached to desires and luxuries? (he should live in the forest, beg for food, and wear robes made from rags, and live without attachments to desires)

What the Buddha said:

“Susukhaṃ vata jīvāma, yesaṃ no natthi kiñcanaṃ, pītibhakkhā bhavissāma devā ābhassarā yathā.”

“We who do not possess anything live so happily. We live by joy like the radiant gods.”

Dhammapada 200 (15:4)

Dharma Discussion - Possessiveness:

When Mahanama suggested they become monks, Anuruddha didn’t want to. Why? He didn’t want to leave his palaces and all the beautiful things he had.

When Anuruddha wanted Bhaddiya to become a monk with him, Bhaddiya didn't want to become a monk, or at least not anytime soon. Why?

He wasn't ready to leave everything he had.

When Venerable Nanda had left his family life to become a monk, he hadn't quite left everything behind. He still wanted elegant clothes and a beautiful bowl.

Anuruddha, Bhaddiya and Nanda were wealthy, so they had a lot of belongings.

They had expensive furniture, dishes, clothes, shoes, horses, carriages and games.

At first, they didn't want to give all those things up to become monks—they were too attached to all their stuff and their comfortable lifestyle.

All their expensive things also gave them status—showing everyone that they were important and successful.

Attachment to things, craving new things, fear of losing our things, and the feeling that things are “mine” is called possessiveness.

Can you remember the feeling of really wanting to buy something special?

Or the disappointment or frustration when you couldn't get something?

Or the excitement when you finally got something special?

Or the feeling of pride when you looked at it or showed it to your friends?

Have you ever felt anxiety when someone was playing your special new toy, or borrowed something of yours, worried they may damage it?

Or have you ever felt fear or panic when you lost and couldn't find something?

Or worry about someone stealing your things?

Or anger when someone grabbed something that belongs to you?

Or sadness and grief when something of yours got broken?

We all have these possessive feelings sometimes.

For some of us, possessiveness is so strong that it often makes us miserable.

For the rest of us, possessiveness is an unpleasant feeling that arises sometimes but seems like a normal part of life.

But we don't have to feel strong unpleasant feelings; we can reduce our possessiveness through the Dharma and be more peaceful and satisfied.

Venerable Bhaddiya shows us how happy we can be when we're not possessive.

And, we don't have to give up all our things and become a monk.

Actually, you may already have felt the joy of not being possessive—living a simple life with only the basic things you need to survive.

Can you think of a situation in which you experienced that? Camping!

Why do people love camping so much, leaving their comfortable homes to live with much less comfort and convenience?

They want to “get away from it all”—not have the responsibilities and worries to take care of all their things, and not worry about what others think of their things.

They just want to be able to enjoy what they are seeing, hearing, smelling, and feeling moment by moment while in nature.

What Buddhist practice is similar to this? Mindfulness!

The Buddha instructed Venerable Nanda to live a life of camping to get rid of his attachment to having special things. This was not punishment, but a way to learn to enjoy living mindfully without the distraction of wanting special nice things.

But after camping, we want to go home and be comfortable with all our nice stuff.

So, how can we reduce our possessiveness? How can we be less attached to our things?

First, let's take a close look at what makes us feel possessive:

Many of us compare what we have with what our friends have, and feel we need to have what they have.

So we can ask ourselves, when I see a classmate or friend who has something new that I like, do I feel I must have it too?

Some of us, like the princes in the story, feel that others will think we are unimportant if we don't have new or expensive things.

So we can ask ourselves, how do I feel if I don't have new or expensive things?

Some of us feel unloved or neglected if we don't have things we want.

So we can ask ourselves, how do I feel when my parents don't give me something I want? Do I feel that they don't care enough about me?

Some of us enjoy the attention when we show others new things we have.

So we can ask ourselves, how do I feel when I show my new things to my friends?

When we answer these questions and find that we sometimes feel unimportant, unloved, neglected, unworthy, embarrassed or that we're not getting enough attention if we don't get things, then it's very important to know that:

Our identity—who we are—is not defined by the things we own.

And our importance, our worthiness, is not defined by the things we own.

Sadly, many people don't believe this. So, they are always trying to prove their importance by buying new things, and they may judge us by what we own.

But we shouldn't let ourselves be led down into that unpleasant way of thinking.

Then what does define who we are and how important we are?

Our good character—including our kindness, honesty, compassion, helpfulness, patience, interest in Dharma—shows our goodness, which is who we really are. We are uncovering our natural goodness by learning and practicing the Dharma.

Although this natural goodness is within us, we have not yet fully uncovered it, so we are far from perfect, but it makes all of us worthy and important all the time, even if we own nothing, as Venerable Bhaddiya learned.

Next, we pay attention when our uncomfortable feelings of possessiveness arise, and try to replace them with more positive thoughts.

We notice when we want to buy something that we can't have.

We notice when we use possessive words: "that's mine," "be careful with my things," "don't use my things," and "don't touch."

We notice when we want to hide our things from others or not share with them.

We notice when we worry that our things might get damaged, lost or stolen.

When we have those kinds of thoughts and words, we can replace them with thoughts like these:

Everything is impermanent—we only use things for a while; one day they won't be useful.

Every new thing we own only will give us joy only for a little while.

Lasting joy comes from our own inner self, not from things we own.

I can enjoy things by seeing them without having to buy or own something.

If I share my new things with someone I trust, I can learn to overcome my worries and possessiveness.

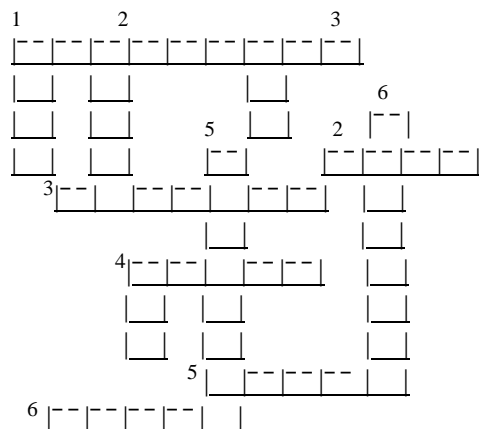
Activity - Crossword Puzzle:

Across:

1. How Baddhiya felt when he became a monk and gave up his possessions
2. Prince Siddhartha saw an old man, a _____ man, a dead man, and an ascetic.
3. How Sanjaya felt when Moggallana and Sariputta left him to go to the Buddha.
4. The Buddha became enlightened under the _____ Tree.
5. The Four _____ Truths.
6. _____ was going to get married but when the Buddha ordained him he was not happy.

Down:

1. To show our gratitude, we can _____ our parents.
2. The Sakyans had too much _____ so they didn't want to bow to the Buddha.
3. The Buddha taught how all things arise and how they come to an _____.
4. To show respect to the Buddha and to the monks, we _____ to them.
5. The first arahant was Venerable _____.
6. What Sujatha offered to Siddhartha on the day he was to become enlightened.



Word Box:

MILKRICE BODHI JEALOUS END KONDANNA NOBLE
 BOW NANDA SICK HAPPINESS HELP PRIDE

Chapter 16 – Rahula and the Dipper

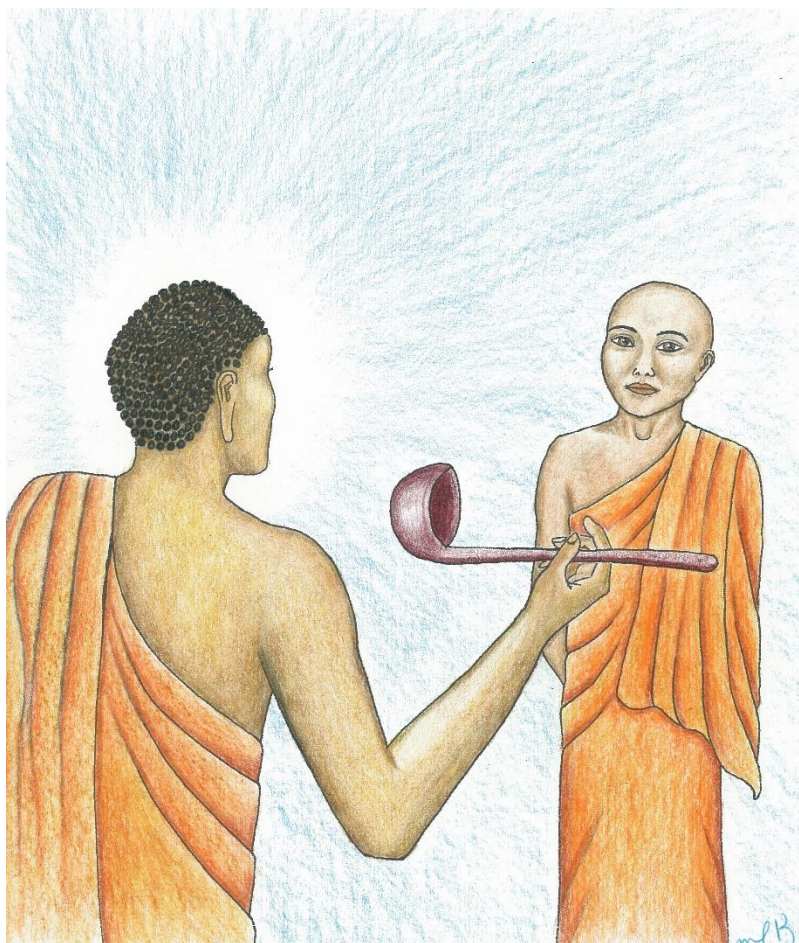
The Buddha's son, Rahula, was ordained as a monk when he was only seven years old. He was well disciplined, intelligent and eager to learn. Venerable Sariputta, who was one of the Buddha's greatest and most advanced students, took care of him, teaching and training him to be a good monk.

One day, when Venerable Rahula was eleven years old, the Buddha came to visit his son. Venerable Rahula saw him coming and according to the tradition, prepared a seat for him and a bucket of water with a water dipper—like a large spoon—to wash his feet. When the Buddha arrived, he washed his feet in the water and took his seat, and Venerable Rahula bowed to him.

The Buddha poured a little water in the water dipper and asked, "Rahula, do you see this small amount of water in the dipper?"

His son replied, "Yes, Lord."

The Buddha said, "Unless people are careful to avoid telling lies, they have only as little good in them as this small amount of water in the dipper."



The Buddha then tossed the water in the dipper on the ground.

He asked, "Rahula, did you see that small amount of water I threw away?"

His son responded, "Yes, Lord."

The Buddha said, "Unless people are careful to avoid telling lies, the good that is in them is thrown away like this."

This means that when a person isn't careful to avoid telling lies, the goodness in him seems to go away, as if it is thrown away.

The Buddha then turned the dipper upside down.

He asked, "Rahula, do you see this water dipper upside down?"

His son answered, "Yes, Lord."

The Buddha said, "Unless people are careful to avoid telling lies, the good there is in them is treated like this."

This means that others will think that because those people lie, they don't have any goodness in them, so they will treat them as if there is no good in them, and have no respect for them.

The Buddha then turned the dipper right side up.

He asked, "Rahula, do you see this water dipper now empty?"

Venerable Rahula said, "Yes, Lord."

The Buddha said, "Unless people are careful to avoid telling lies, they will be as empty of good as this."

This means that if a person keeps telling lies and doesn't try to avoid telling lies, they will lose their good qualities.

The Buddha then talked about an elephant fighting in a war. In those days, there were no tanks or planes, so people rode elephants to fight wars. Elephants could fight, knocking other riders off their elephants or horses, by smacking them with their head, ears, tusks, trunk or tail, or by kicking or stomping their feet.

The Buddha said to his son, "Suppose a man rides a big elephant in battle, and the elephant fights with his four feet, his head, his ears, his tusks and even his tail, but not with his trunk. The man on his back would think, 'Although the elephant uses his whole body to fight, if he doesn't use his trunk, then the elephant has not yet devoted his life to defending the king.'"

"But if the elephant uses his whole body and his trunk also, then the man would think, 'He uses his whole body and his trunk, and so he has now devoted his life to defending the king, because he is making effort in all the ways that he can. Now he needs no more training.' So, Rahula, unless people are careful to avoid telling lies, I say they still need more training. You must train yourself in this way. Following the Dharma in some ways is not enough. You must follow Dharma in all the ways that you can. You must train yourself never to say something that is a lie even for a joke."

The Buddha then asked, "Rahula, what do you think a mirror is for?"

His son answered, "To look at oneself in, Lord."

The Buddha said, “In the same way, you should keep looking at yourself—the actions of your body, your speech and your mind.”

He explained, “*Before* you act or speak, think: ‘Would this end up harming me? Would this end up harming someone else? Would this end up harming both myself and someone else?’ If it would harm anyone, then it is unwholesome (wrong) and you shouldn’t do it or say it. If it would not harm yourself or others, then it is wholesome; you can do it.”

Also, *when* you are doing or saying something, think ‘Is this going to harm me? Is this going to harm anyone else?’ If so, then it is unwholesome and you should stop doing it.”

Also, *after* you do or say something, think about whether it harmed you or anyone else in any way. If you realize that harm resulted from it, then you learn that it was unwholesome and you should not do it again.”

Venerable Rahula then learned to watch himself, as if looking at himself in a mirror, to be aware of whether his actions, his words, and even his thoughts might be harmful to himself (negative karma) or harmful to others. Also, he learned to later think about his actions, words and thoughts and consider whether they might have been harmful to himself or others.

Questions:

1. The Buddha said that, similar to a little bit of water in the dipper, a person who is not careful to avoid telling lies has how much goodness in him? (a little bit)
2. What happens to the little bit of goodness in a person who isn’t careful to avoid telling lies? (it is thrown away, it seems to go away)
3. How will others treat a person who isn’t careful to avoid telling lies? (others will treat him as if there is no goodness in him, and have no respect for him)
4. What will happen to the good qualities of a person who keeps telling lies and doesn’t try to avoid telling lies? (the person loses their good qualities)
5. An elephant who uses his whole body but not his trunk is like a person who follows the Dharma in some ways but not all ways, and an elephant that uses his whole body including his trunk is like a person who follows the Dharma in what ways? (all ways that he can)
6. What did the Buddha teach Rahula to watch in himself, like watching in a mirror? (his actions, speech (words) and thoughts)

What the Buddha said:

“Ekaṃ Dhammaṃ atītassa, musāvādissa jantuno, vitiṇṇaparalokassa,
natthi pāpaṃ akāriyaṃ.”

“For a liar who has violated the one Dharma virtue of truthfulness, he does not care about his future in his next lives, and he will do any evil act.”

Dhammapada 176 (13:10)

Dharma Discussion - Honesty:

Rahula, the son of the Buddha, carefully raised as a young child in the palace by Yashodhara, was now a monk, being trained by the great Venerable Sariputta.

He was very well behaved and disciplined, so surely he knew not to lie.

Yet, the Buddha thought it was important to teach him not to lie, not to be dishonest. Why do you think the Buddha specially instructed Rahula not to lie?

Because it isn't always easy to avoid lying, or to avoid being dishonest.

We know we shouldn't lie, but there are many situations where we might be tempted to lie or be dishonest.

Can you think of any situations when you were tempted to lie, or when you found it difficult to say the truth? How in those situations might we avoid lying?

As children, we might lie—for example, we say “I didn't do it”—because we're afraid of being punished for our mistake.

Or we might lie because we're worried that our parent or teacher would be upset if we tell the truth, and we don't want to upset them.

Often, even adults will tell a little fib—or even a big bold lie—to keep the peace, so someone doesn't get angry or upset.

Rather than being dishonest, what can we do instead?

Admit our mistake and apologize, explain truthfully the circumstances, say why we did what we did, and not be afraid of being punished.

Remember that if we get caught lying, the punishment or anger would be much worse.

If you're afraid to tell the truth, what can you say to help everyone calm?

You can say, “I don't want to upset you, but I want to tell you the truth.”

People often lie to get something they really want, or when they feel they desperately need something, they tell a lie to convince someone to give it to them.

If you find yourself tempted to lie to get what you want, what can you do instead?

Think: if you feel you have to lie to get it, you probably don't really need it. You can survive without it. And you've made merit by resisting the impulse to lie!

People lie to make an excuse for their mistake, when they think others won't understand or accept the true reason they did something wrong. For example, if they're late, they say traffic was bad rather than admit they slept too late.

Most people have lied at some times in their lives to avoid being embarrassed, or to avoid feeling ashamed.

In those situations, instead of lying, maybe we don't need to explain or give an excuse. We can simply apologize without explaining, or, if it would seem offensive not to explain, we can give a general or vague excuse that isn't dishonest, like "I'm having a hard day today."

Sometimes people lie to avoid embarrassing someone else. They don't want to tell something that's bad but true about someone.

How you can avoid lying about the person? It depends on the situation.

If you are talking to someone in authority, like a teacher or other school staff, or your intent is to protect yourself or someone else from harm, it's probably better to tell them the truth about the person, even if it's bad, because it may help the person in the long run.

In other situations, you can try to avoid talking about the person, or just say something positive about them.

Sometimes people lie to fit in with others, when they don't feel confident just being themselves. For example, they say that they like something that they really don't like, or that they did something they really didn't do, so others will accept them. They say what sounds normal but isn't the truth.

How do we avoid this type of dishonesty? By remembering to be yourself, because kind people will accept you just as you are, and unkind people aren't worth trying to be friends with. You don't need to change yourself for others.

Also, others usually are more comfortable with you when you are comfortable being yourself than when you aren't being genuine, when you are too much of a "follower."

Often, people say everything is fine or okay when it's not okay, so others won't ask questions or find out information they don't want to reveal. Sometimes we don't want to make others feel stressed by our problem.

It's quite normal in some cultures to greet someone by casually saying "how are you" and "fine" is the expected response.

But when someone—like a parent, teacher, relative or friend—asks you how you are, should you hide your feelings?

If you do, then you're missing an opportunity to get support and understanding or even help. It's best to open up to those who care about you even if it's difficult, even if you may worry them.

Also, they would be more upset if you waited and things got worse before they found out.

In some families that are having difficulties, the children learn that lying helps them get what they need and helps them avoid conflicts.

When the family difficulties are ongoing, or when there aren't good role models at home, kids may not even realize they are lying. It becomes a way of life.

Usually people lie to avoid pain—their own pain or someone else’s pain.
So if someone lies, it doesn’t necessarily mean that they are a bad person.
We can have compassion for them, hoping they can overcome their difficulty.

There are many reasons why people don’t tell the truth, and many situations where we are tempted to be dishonest.

By thinking about these situations, we can be more aware of when they might come up, so we can try our best to be honest and keep a habit of being honest, avoiding dishonesty.

We should also think about the negative results of lying.

What might happen if we lie?

We could get caught lying. How do you feel if you get caught lying? Ashamed. The result is usually worse than if you had just told the truth.

Also, if we lie, others won’t trust us.

Remember the Buddha holding the dipper upside down?

People may lose respect for us if they know we are dishonest.

Also, in order to avoid getting caught, we have to remember our lies.

And we might even have to tell even more lies to support the first lie.

What happens if we lie many times?

We develop a habit of lying. One lie leads to another.

If we have a habit of lying, we think we can get away with misbehavior without getting caught, which encourages us to get involved in more wrong behavior.

This is the lesson the Buddha was teaching Rahula: that when we lie, we get involved in more wrong behavior, so the goodness in us disappears, as he showed by throwing away the water in the dipper, and eventually our good qualities are gone, as he showed by the empty dipper.

So, do we actually avoid pain by lying? No—we end up with more pain and difficulty when we lie.

We should try to be aware when we are saying something that isn’t true.

We can only learn to be honest when we’re aware of when we’re being dishonest.

Remember the Buddha teaching Rahula to be aware of what he is doing and saying, like looking at yourself in a mirror.

Activity: Fill in the Blanks:

I SHOULD NOT LIE BECAUSE . . .

1. Lying becomes a bad _____.
2. Others will lose _____ for me.
3. Other people will not _____ me if I lie.
4. I will have to _____ my lies to avoid getting caught lying.
5. If I tell one lie, I may have to tell _____ lies to avoid getting caught.
6. I would feel _____ if I got caught lying.
7. A habit of lying leads to more _____ behavior.

WORD BOX:

TRUST REMEMBER WRONG
HABIT ASHAMED MORE RESPECT

Chapter 17 – Anathapindika and the New Monastery

The Buddha and his student monks had left their families, so they had no homes, no buildings to live in. They just slept in the woods under trees, in caves, under overhanging large rocks, on heaps of straw, or even at burial grounds. As they arose in the early morning each day, they left those places with no expectation of returning. In this way, by learning not to be attached to a comfortable home or place to live, they practiced non-attachment.

When they were staying in a forest called Bamboo Grove, near the town of Rajagaha, a wealthy man who traded goods—a merchant—saw the monks walking slowly and gracefully, looking only a little distance ahead, with very peaceful expressions on their faces. The merchant had a feeling of trust and admiration in his heart toward the monks.

One day he asked some of them, “Lords, if I had some buildings constructed for you to live in, would you live in them?”

One of the monks answered, “The Blessed One has not allowed buildings for us.”

The merchant said, “Then, Lords, ask the Blessed One and tell me what he says.”

The monks told the Buddha about their conversation with the merchant. The Buddha gave his permission for buildings to be constructed, and the monks told the merchant.

In one day, the merchant had sixty small houses built for the monks. Then he invited the Buddha and his monks for the next day’s lunch, during which he would formally offer the sixty buildings to the Buddha and his monks.

The merchant, excitedly planning for the next day’s lunch, gave directions to his cooks. He told them to get up early and start cooking rice, curries, sauces, and sweet desserts for the large group of monks who would be coming the next day. While he was busy directing them, his brother-in-law, Anathapindika, arrived at his house to discuss some business, after having traveled there from the town of Sāvatti.

Anathapindika stood watching the merchant, wondering why he was so intent on talking to the cooks about preparing food, as if it was the only thing that was important. Every other time he visited, the merchant immediately dropped everything and welcomed him. Why was the merchant ignoring him?

When the merchant finally finished directing the cooks, he went to Anathapindika and welcomed him. When they sat down, Anathapindika said,

“You seem so busy. What’s all the excitement about? Are you preparing for a wedding? Or are you making some great religious offering? Or have you invited the king and his ministers for tomorrow?”

The merchant replied, "There is no marriage. Nor have the king and his ministers been invited for tomorrow. But I have a great religious offering. I have invited for tomorrow the Sangha of monks headed by the Buddha, the Enlightened One."

Anathapindika couldn't believe what the merchant just said. He asked,

"Did you say 'the Buddha?'"

The merchant replied, "I did say 'the Buddha.'"

Anathapindika, still not believing it, asked again, "Did you say 'the *Buddha*'?"

The merchant repeated, "I did say 'the Buddha.'"

Anathapindika, still in shock, asked, "Did you say '*the Buddha*'?"

The merchant replied again, "Yes, I did say 'the Buddha.'"

Anathapindika said, "This news, the Buddha, the Buddha coming here, this is a very rare opportunity! Is it possible to see this Blessed One, the Fully Enlightened One, right *now*?"

The merchant said, "This is not the time to go and see him. You can see him early tomorrow."

Anathapindika was overwhelmed, thinking "Early tomorrow I shall be able to see the Blessed One, the fully enlightened Buddha!"

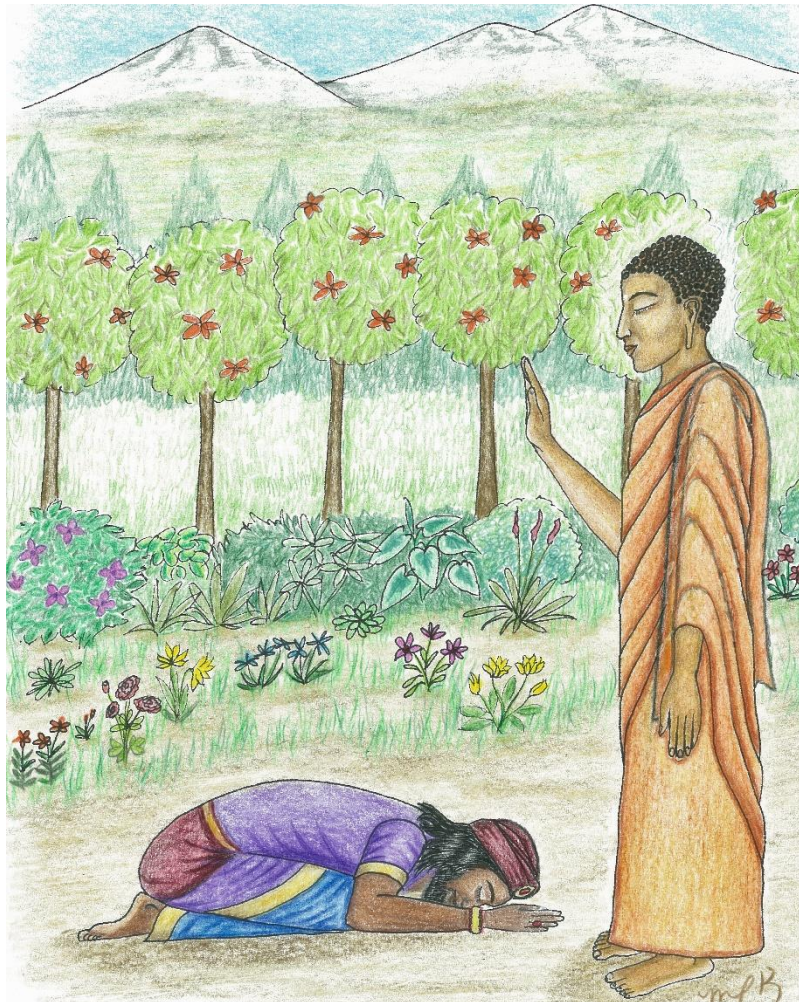
That night when he went to bed at the merchant's house, he was so excited that he couldn't sleep. He got up three times, thinking it was dawn. Finally, he walked out of the house when it was still dark. Heavenly beings opened the gate for him. The glow of fire lamps from houses in the city provided a bit of light at first, but as he walked away from the city, it became very dark, so then he became afraid and thought of going back.

An invisible spirit called Sivaka encouraged him to continue, saying, "A hundred elephants, a hundred horses, a hundred chariots, a hundred thousand ladies with beautiful gems and earrings, all these are not even worth a part of one step forward now. Go forward! Better go forward than turn back."

The spirit repeated it three times, and by that time, Anathapindika was no longer walking in total darkness. The sun started to rise as he was walking, and his fear disappeared. He was near the Cool Grove where the Buddha was staying.

The Buddha was awake, walking around, and saw Anathapindika coming. He then sat down and said to Anathapindika, "Come, Sudatta."

Happy and hopeful, Anathapindika thought, “He is calling me by my real name! He knows my real name although we have never met before!”



Bowing to the Buddha, he said, “I hope that the Blessed One has slept well.”

The Buddha said, “A true holy man always sleeps well, who has attained full Nirvana, who has rejected all attachments. There is no conflict in his heart. He who is at peace, who has peace established in the mind, sleeps in bliss.”

The Buddha continued instructing Anathapindika in the Dharma. While Anathapindika sat there listening, he had a deep understanding--profound wisdom—that everything appears and then later disappears. He said,

“Magnificent Lord, beginning from today, allow me to be your follower. I take refuge in you

for as long as I live. Lord, please accept tomorrow’s lunch from me.”

The Buddha silently agreed, accepting the invitation.

He and his students then came for the meal provided by the merchant, who offered the sixty buildings to the Buddha and Sangha.

The merchant heard about the invitation made by his brother-in-law for the next day, but Anathapindika was not at his own home in Sāvatti to offer his food to the monks. He was staying in Rajagaha with the merchant. So how would Anathapindika make an offering tomorrow? The merchant, with kind and generous thoughts, said to him,

“The Buddha and his monks have been invited by you for tomorrow. But you are a guest here. I will give you money to provide the food for the Buddha and the monks.”

Anathapindika replied, “There is no need. I have money to provide food for the Buddha and the monks.”

A man from the town heard about the invitation and he too generously offered money to Anathapindika to provide the food. Anathapindika told him there was no need. King Bimbisara also heard about the invitation, and offered money for the food, but Anathapindika replied there was no need, he had enough money.

Anathapindika bought food for the lunch, and early the next morning directed the cooks to prepare it. When it was ready, he sent a messenger to the Buddha to let him know the meal was ready.

When the Buddha and his students arrived at the merchant’s house with their bowls and were seated, Anathapindika served the Buddha and the monks all the different kinds of good food. After the meal, Anathapindika sat near the Buddha and said:

“Lord, please accept my invitation to come with your monks and stay with me for the rainy season.”

The Buddha responded, “Buddhas are happy to stay in rooms that are empty.”

Anathapindika said softly, “I know, Blessed One, I know.”

The Buddha then gave a Dharma talk to everyone at the merchant’s house.

Anathapindika was popular in the town of Rajagaha, and many friends and acquaintances welcomed him to visit them at their homes. When he finished his business meetings in Rajagaha, he went back to his home town.

On the way, he told people, “Sirs, make gardens, build places for a big group of monks to stay, and prepare gifts of food. A Buddha has appeared in the world. He has been invited by me. He will come by this road.”

The people were curious and excited to see a real Buddha, so they started making preparations as Anathapindika directed.

When Anathapindika arrived in his home town of Sāvatti, he looked around for a large and peaceful property for the Buddha and the monks to stay. He saw Prince Jeta’s park, a very beautiful and peaceful area—the perfect place. He went to Prince Jeta and after greeting him, said,

“Sir, give me your park to use.”

Prince Jeta loved his park. He was so attached to his park that he didn't want to let it be used by others. He certainly wouldn't give it away and he didn't want to sell his beautiful park, so he set an enormously high price for it. He said,

"The park cannot be given unless a hundred thousand gold coins are spread over it."

That was an extreme amount of money, and it seemed absurd to have to spread the money over the land. But Anathapindika was determined to give a gift of the beautiful park to the Buddha. He agreed to the price by saying,

"The park is taken, sir."

Prince Jeta couldn't believe it. He said, "The park is not taken."

The two men disagreed on whether the prince actually had sold the park to Anathapindika, so they went to some judges to ask whether the deal had been made. The judges said that as soon as Anathapindika agreed to the offer, the sale was made.

Anathapindika ordered his wealth to be brought in gold coins loaded into carts, and then to be placed neatly on the ground, spaced evenly in the park, according to the condition set by Prince Jeta to purchase the land. After they finished setting all the hundred thousand gold coins on the ground, there was a small portion of the park land that was not yet covered with gold coins. There weren't enough coins to cover the portion near the gate. Anathapindika asked people to bring additional coins to cover that space.

Prince Jeta, observing what was going on and hearing Anathapindika asking for more coins, thought to himself, "This can be no ordinary matter since Anathapindika is spending so much gold on this land." He knew the land would be offered to the Buddha, but he didn't know much about the Buddha. He said,

"Enough, don't cover that space. Leave that space for me to offer. It shall be my gift."

Anathapindika thought, "This Prince Jeta is a powerful and well-known person. It would be very good if such well-known people become confident in the Dharma." So he left the portion of land for Prince Jeta to offer. The prince had a gate-house, like a security booth, constructed on the land as an extra gift.

Anathapindika then ordered and paid for construction of buildings on the park land. Soon there were buildings for the Buddha and the monks to live in, meditation and meeting halls, terraces, fire rooms for cooking, bathhouses, bathrooms, storage buildings, walkways, and ponds constructed in the park, all in preparation for the Buddha and his students.

This became the famous monastery called Jetavana in the city of Sāvatti.

Following Anathapindika's suggestion, the people on the road to Sāvatti eagerly worked on constructing buildings for the Buddha and his large group of monks to stay overnight on their journey. The Buddha sent a few monks to help direct the villagers to construct the buildings. The people provided robes, food, medicine and places to stay for the monks while they were helping on the construction projects.

A poor tailor saw the people making buildings for the monks. He thought, "This is extraordinary, all these people eagerly constructing buildings, and the monks overseeing the work being given all these robes, food, and medicines. I should make a building too!"

The tailor got some clay and made some bricks and then set up a scaffold to climb while he laid the bricks to build into walls. But he had never constructed a building before. His wall wasn't straight enough, so it collapsed. He tried again a second time, and again it fell. He tried a third time, and when it fell again, he was very frustrated and annoyed. He complained,

"The monks, the sons of the Sakyans, advise and instruct the people who give them robes, food, medicine, and places to stay. But I am poor. No one instructs and advises me or oversees my building."

The monks heard about his complaint, and wondered what to do, so they told the Buddha about it. The Buddha then discussed it with them, saying,

"Monks, I allow building work to be formally organized among the people. A monk who oversees such building work shall make sure it is completed quickly and efficiently, and shall make sure that whatever is damaged or broken is repaired."

This would ensure that monks would organize building construction so everyone would be treated fairly and would have an equal opportunity to work on constructing buildings for monks, whether they were skilled or not.

Questions:

1. Where did the monks spend the night before the merchant built the sixty houses? (under trees, in caves, on heaps of straw, or at burial grounds)
2. What did the monks learn and practice by sleeping outdoors in different places? (non-attachment, not to be attached to a comfortable home or particular place to live)
3. What type of room did the Buddha say he is happy with? (an empty room)
4. What payment did Prince Jeta request from Anathapindika? (100,000 gold coins placed over the land)

5. What did Prince Jeta do when Anathapindika's coins were not enough to cover all the land? (he gave the remaining land to the Buddha and monks as his gift, and built a gate-house on that land)

6. Did the Buddha want to allow poor people to be generous, helping to construct buildings? (yes)

What the Buddha said:

“Sukhā mattheyyatā loke, atho petteyyatā sukhā, sukhā sāmāññatā loke, atho brahmaññatā sukhā.”

“In this world, serving one's mother brings happiness, serving one's father brings happiness, serving the monks brings happiness, and serving the holy ones brings happiness.”

Dhammapada 332 (23:13)

Dharma discussion - Generosity:

We often talk about generosity in Buddhism. Why is it so important?

It is a way to make merit, good karma.

It also helps us to let go of something, to get rid of something.

What does it help us get rid of? Our greed, selfishness, attachments.

We all are attached to many good things—for example, our family, friends, pets, toys, clothes, home, and favorite activities.

But what happens when we are too attached to too many things?

We get upset each time we lose them or can't have them, so then we are often miserable.

The Buddha's monks were trained not to be attached to anything, not even to home, clothing, hairstyle, or belongings, because they all wear robes, have shaved heads, have very few belongings, and stay wherever they can.

By not being so attached to things, they could live very peacefully.

We are not monks, but we can learn to be more peaceful too, by letting go of some unnecessary attachments.

How? By practicing generosity—sharing what we have with others.

For example, suppose we are very attached to chocolate cake.

When we see chocolate cake being served, we hope to get a big piece.

If we're given a very small piece, or we're served last, we might feel disappointed.

Instead of being so attached to a piece of cake, how can we practice generosity?

We can offer pieces of cake to others first, take the last piece, and make sure everyone got a piece of cake. We can share our slice of cake with someone else.

Would you feel happier eating the biggest piece of cake, or would you feel happier serving the cake and making sure everyone got a piece?

Do you think the merchant and Anathapindika were happier keeping their food and money for themselves, or making offerings to the Buddha and his monks?

Being generous can give us a lot of joy! Sharing joy gives us more joy!

Even if we don't have much to give, like the tailor, we can find ways to be generous.

Instead of trying to build houses himself, how could the tailor have been generous? By offering his time and effort to help others construct houses.

Similarly, we can help others—offering our time and effort.

We all have time and energy we can offer.

Can you think of some examples of how you can be generous, offering your time and energy at home?

You can help your parents carry the groceries, you can set the table for meals, clear the dishes from the table, wash dishes, or help with laundry.

You can look around and see what needs to be cleaned up or put away.

When your parents are busy, you can help with little brothers or sisters.

We can use our skills to make a gift for someone.

Can you think of some examples? Making a birthday card, a craft or art project.

And we can be generous in sharing our toys.

Generosity means we are giving willingly, because we want to give.

If someone is bullying or manipulating you, or pressuring you to give them something they don't really need, then you aren't giving because you want to.

When we give because we feel forced to give, is that generosity? No.

And if we give in to manipulation or bullying, then we are encouraging them to do it again to us or to others.

Also, generosity doesn't mean trading—giving so we get something in return.

For example, if we help someone so they will give us money or a reward, or if we give to a friend so they will do something for us, is that generosity? No.

What is the opposite of generous? Stingy, or greedy, or selfish, or too attached to things.

Stinginess means we want to keep things for ourselves, we don't want to share, we don't want to give our free time to help someone else.

Sometimes we may have good reason not to give, not to share.

For all of us, including adults, sometimes it's not easy to decide whether to share or give something.

To determine whether we are being stingy or being reasonable, we can pay attention to our thoughts when deciding whether or not to share.

For example, when thinking about sharing a toy with someone, are you worried that they may break it?

Of course it's reasonable not to share something fragile with someone who might be likely to break it, like a very young child.

Or are you concerned that if you gave away a gift, the person who gave it to you would be disappointed that you gave it away? This is a reasonable concern.

Or, if you give something away that's very useful, are you worried you might need it in the future?

We have to balance what we really need with what others might really need.

It's not always easy to make those decisions.

If you often have a hard time sharing or giving to others, think about this:

Not having what we need is the result of having kept too much for ourselves—having been too stingy—in previous lives.

Our actions, our good and bad karmas, result in our good and bad luck.

So, the way to have what you need, to avoid being poor, is to be generous.

That might not seem to make sense.

It doesn't make sense to most people in the world, who think that saving and keeping as much money as they can, or investing it so they can earn and keep even more money, is the best way to become rich.

Of course, it's good to save money and not waste it on unnecessary things.

But when we have what we need and we are generous to those who are needy, we are making merit, creating the causes for good luck.

Because, generosity makes merit—it's a good action that is the cause for good luck.

Activity:

Each student writes the quotation of Buddha (above) on paper, and then underneath writes about 10 or more numbered lines to write a list. On the lines, students list things they can do at home to practice generosity with their parents. If not all the lines are filled, students can ask their parents to suggest some ways they could help at home. The list can be hung up at home to remind students to practice generosity at home.

Chapter 18 – The Rainy Season

The number of monks who were students of the Buddha was growing. More and more men wanted to become monks with the Buddha as their teacher. After they heard his teachings and practiced and understood them, the Buddha instructed the monks to go out and teach the Dharma so that many more people could learn the way to enlightenment. This was not just for the benefit of the people, but also for the monks to practice loving-kindness— truly caring about all people and wanting them to be happy and peaceful, and therefore walking very long distances to many towns and villages, camping along the way in uncomfortable conditions, in order to help people learn the Dharma.



The monks traveled in large groups, walking from place to place, from one town or village to the next, during all types of weather—in the winter, summer and rainy season. When they traveled in such large groups during times of rainy weather, they were walking on the soft, soggy, wet ground at the time when the new grass was just starting to grow and the young plants were just sprouting up from the ground. The tender new grasses and plants were trampled, crushed, and broken by the many feet stepping on them. Tiny creatures coming out of the ground to enjoy the rain, such as insects, spiders, frogs, snails, caterpillars and worms, were stepped on. Wide, muddy paths appeared where the monks had walked.

The people in the villages noticed this. They also observed that the students of other holy men stayed in one place during the rainy season and therefore didn't trample the grass and plants and didn't create any muddy paths. The villagers were annoyed at the Buddha's monks and said among each other,

“How can these monks, the sons of the Sakyans, go wandering in all three seasons, trampling down the green grass, injuring plant life and bringing harm to so many little creatures? These

other holy men with their mediocre teaching at least stay inside during the rainy season. Even the vultures that make their nests on the tree tops stay in their nests during the rain. But these Sakyans go wandering in all three seasons, trampling down the green grass, injuring plant life and bringing harm to many little creatures!”

Some monks heard the villagers complaining. The monks wondered, “What should we do?” They wanted to help the people but they didn’t want to hurt the little creatures. If they stopped traveling, then many people wouldn’t be able to learn the Dharma. Should they rescue the human beings or should they rescue the tiny beings from suffering?

The monks told the Buddha what the villagers were saying. It didn’t surprise the Buddha at all. He knew everything that was happening. But, as usual for him, he waited until someone told him about a problem so that he could give a solution to the problem along with a Dharma teaching that people would always remember.

The Buddha felt intense loving-kindness toward all life, including the small creatures and tender plants that were being trampled in the mud, and he taught his students also to develop that great loving-kindness for all and never to harm any being. Yet, it was important for the monks to reach out to as many people as possible so they could hear the Dharma and have an opportunity to make merit by their offerings to the monks.

However, now that more people had heard of the Buddha, there was another problem: they wanted to go and see him and his monks, and it was difficult for them to find the monks during their travels. He had a solution to all these problems: if the monks stayed in one place during the rainy season, then people easily could find them at least during that season, and there wouldn’t be huge groups of people trampling the soft ground.

So, he announced, “Monks, I allow you to stay in one place during the rainy season.”

From that time onward, the monks stayed in one place during the rainy season where the people could visit them, hear them teach the Dharma, and provide them food and medicine.

The Buddha set a rule for the monks that they were to stay in retreat—that is, stay at one location to focus on meditation and learning his teachings—during the entire three months of the rainy season and if they must leave for an unusual situation, such as to visit someone who is ill, they must return within seven days.

There was a group of thirty monks who started traveling to visit the Buddha where he was staying at Savatthi. On the way, the rainy season started, so according to the new rule, they had to stop and stay in retreat. They stayed at a place called Saketa which was rather close to Savatthi, but too far away to see him within seven days. Finally, after the end of the rainy season, they started to travel, but the road was wet and full of big puddles. Their robes became soaking wet and muddy, and they became uncomfortable and tired, as they had walked long distances day after day in the same wet robes.

When they finally reached the Buddha at Savatthi, he asked them,

“Did you have any difficulties? Did you get enough food? Did you spend your retreat in peace, with friendly discussion without quarreling?”

The monks responded, “We had no difficulties, we got enough food, we did not quarrel. But we could not reach Savatthi in time to be with you during the rainy season, so we stayed in Saketa. You were so close, but we couldn’t see you. We were anxious to see you, so we traveled here quickly, and now we are tired and wet.”

The Buddha felt great compassion for them. He was pleased that they obeyed his rules and were so disciplined. So, he announced that all monks who obeyed his rules and stayed in one place during the rainy season could accept new robes at the end of the rainy season. He gave the group of thirty monks several pieces of fabric which had been donated to him, and told the monks to make a new robe with those pieces and to choose which monk among them should receive it.

The robes were made from ten pieces of fabric stitched together, because one large piece of fabric is valuable, and monks don’t own valuable things. When monks had to find cloth on their own to make robes, they sometimes used cloths that had been put on dead bodies or that were thrown away by others. The cloth pieces were then washed carefully and dyed an orange, yellow, reddish or brown color.

So now, at the end of the rainy season, people could bring fabric for the monks to make new robes and offer it at a Robe Offering Ceremony. They also could offer other things needed by the monks, such as a belt, a bowl, a razor, needle and thread, and a water strainer to strain out insects and dirt from drinking water. And, one monk who performed his duties and discipline very well would be chosen by agreement of all the other monks in that community to receive a special robe which was stitched and dyed while monks were constantly chanting.

These traditions for the Robe Offering Ceremony are still practiced today in temples practicing the Theravada Buddhist tradition, including in south Asian countries.

Questions:

1. Why did the monks travel around so much? (to teach the Dharma to many people in different towns and villages)
2. What happened on the ground when big groups of monks traveled in the rainy season? (the new grass and young plants that were just starting to grow were trampled, crushed and broken; tiny creatures were stepped on; and wide, muddy paths were created)

3. Why did the Buddha wait until the monks told him about the villagers' complaints to give a solution to the problem? (he usually waited until someone told him about a problem so he could give a solution and Dharma teaching that people would always remember)
4. What was the Buddha's solution for the harm to the tiny creatures and the monks needing to teach the Dharma to many people? (the monks must spend the rainy season staying in one place)
5. What are the monks supposed to focus on during the rainy season retreat? (meditation and learning the Buddha's teachings)
6. What happens at the end of the rainy season? (the Robe Offering Ceremony)

What the Buddha said:

“Apādahehi me mettāṃ, mettāṃ dvipādahehi me, catuppadehi me mettāṃ, mettāṃ bahuppadehi me.”

“I give my loving-kindness to those with no feet, I give my loving-kindness to those with two feet, I give my loving-kindness to those with four feet, I give my loving-kindness to those with many feet.”

Khandhaparitta

Dharma Discussion – Loving-kindness:

What was the Buddha always focused on?

Teaching the Dharma to help people become enlightened.

Why? Because he knew that all unenlightened beings in the world are suffering—feeling stress, discomfort, unpleasantness, disappointment—

and the only way for suffering to end, to have true happiness and peace, is to become enlightened.

So he had extreme loving-kindness and compassion, wishing and helping all beings everywhere find true happiness and peace and be free from suffering.

Why do we say “loving-kindness”? Why not just love, or just kindness?

The word “love” is not enough, because it often means a feeling of affection toward someone with the expectation that they will give us affection in return. It's an exchange of joy—I give you joy so you so give me joy.

So, we get attached to the joy we get, and we get angry if they don't give us joy.

Then the kindness is gone!

The word “kindness” is not enough because it includes doing kind things and saying kind words without love; being kind just because we ought to be kind, so other people will see that we did the right thing.

Loving-kindness is love along with thoughts, words and acts of kindness.
Loving-kindness means truly caring about other beings and wishing for their peace and happiness, while being kind in our actions, words and thoughts.

The Buddha teaches us to have loving-kindness for all living beings.

It's easy to have loving-kindness for our family, friends and others who we like.

But what about those who harm, bully, or abuse others, or who are hateful?

We naturally dislike them; we fear they may do something harmful,
so it's difficult to have loving-kindness for them.

And if we're kind to them, they may try to control or manipulate us.

It's best to avoid them.

So how can we have loving-kindness toward all beings, including them?

We can start by learning to have loving-kindness for animals that may harm us.

Can you think of some animals or other creatures can harm us or bite us?

Poisonous snakes, spiders, sharks, jellyfish, scorpions, hornets, bears.

Also, we can learn to have loving-kindness toward creatures we think are disgusting. Are there any animals you don't like? Slugs, worms, rats, centipedes?

The Buddha advised us to learn to have loving-kindness for all beings by practicing having loving-kindness for these creatures. How can we do that?

Be careful not to harm them, and rescue them from danger if we can.

We can see that they're like us—they want food, and to be safe and comfortable.

They're usually scared of us; they are just trying to defend themselves.

They are interesting; when we learn more about them, we appreciate them more.

Similarly, when we learn more about why people behave the way they do—for example, problems they have in their family—then it's easier to care about them.

When we have loving-kindness toward creatures we don't like, then it's easier to have loving-kindness toward people we don't like.

And by being careful not to harm any living beings, we develop a habit of caring for others, wherever we are.

Are there other ways we can have loving-kindness for people we don't like?

We can try to see that their hate, anger, greed, and other negative qualities are like an illness that makes them confused and ignorant.

They may be intelligent in other ways, but they're confused about emotions.

They think they're strong and powerful when they act with hate and anger.

But they're hurting inside; they're reacting to something painful or threatening.

And they're creating a worse future for themselves with their negative karmas.

We can't see their good qualities when they're covered with negative emotions.

What do we do when there is someone with a contagious illness around us?

We stay away so we don't get sick. And we feel compassion for them.

Similarly, we stay away from a person with hatred and anger so we don't get influenced or upset by their behavior.

And we give them our loving-kindness from a distance, by sending them our wish that they learn to be happy and peaceful so their hatred and anger will disappear.

In our mind, we can say something like, "May you be happy and peaceful."

But can just wishes and thoughts really help? Yes! First, they help us relax.

If we don't like a person, then we have negative thoughts about them—and maybe anger, hatred, revenge, jealousy or worry—that distract us and tangle up our mind with stress.

When we send loving-kindness toward the person, we can't have negative thoughts at the same time.

So what happens to our negative thoughts?

They disappear! So the person doesn't bother us anymore, at least for a while.

And we see that we have the power to overcome our negative thoughts.

The more we do that, the more power we have over our mind!

Second, the good thoughts and wishes create merit.

Whenever we do, say or think something that is good, according to the Dharma, it is merit: a good karma, a cause for a good result.

Whenever we get rid of a negative thought and replace it with a good thought, we're purifying our mind, giving us more peace and bringing us closer to enlightenment.

Merit gives us a good result, plus it gives peace and happiness to others when we dedicate our merits—offer them to other beings.

Are there any other ways we can practice loving-kindness?

Being considerate—wherever you are, consider how others around you might feel, and treat them as you would like to be treated.

Look for ways you can help others—your parents, teachers, sisters, brothers, relatives, new students, and so on.

Do loving-kindness meditation and prayers, wishing that all beings be happy, peaceful and free from suffering.

Activity:

Draw a heart or a lotus flower, and write "Loving-kindness" inside it. Around the heart or lotus, draw people, animals, insects and other beings. Draw arrows from the heart or lotus toward the beings to represent sending out our loving-kindness.

Chapter 19 – The First Buddhist Nuns

The Buddha's father, King Suddhōdana, became very ill and soon thereafter, he died. However, he had become an arahant, so he passed into nirvana, ultimate bliss and peace, free from the cycle of birth and death. When the Buddha heard the news of his father's death, he returned to his home town of Kapilavatthu,

The queen, Mahapajāpati Gotami—the Buddha's aunt who took care of him like a mother since he was an infant—was now alone without her husband, the king. When she heard the Buddha was in town, she went to visit and said to him,

“Lord, it would be good if women could become ordained to go from the house life into homelessness in the Dharma and Discipline taught by you.”

The Buddha said, “Gotami, do not ask for ordination to go from the house life into homelessness for women in the Dharma and Discipline.”

She asked three times, but he would not agree. Sad and unhappy, she understood, “The lord does not allow it.” She bowed to him and left.

After the Buddha's visit in Kapilavatthu, he traveled for many days, stopping here and there along the way, until he reached a town called Vesali.

Meanwhile, Gotami was not giving up on her hope to be ordained and live like the monks. She had her hair cut very short and began wearing a robe like a monk's robe. She started walking on the long journey to Vesali along with several women from the Sakya clan, including Yashōdhara, who was the wife of Prince Siddhartha who later became the Buddha.

When they finally arrived in Vesali at the meditation hall where the Buddha was, Gotami stood outside on the porch. Her feet, not used to walking long distances, were swollen from walking barefoot on such a long journey. Her arms and legs were covered with dust from the wind blowing dust from the road. She was feeling very sad, and tears rolled down her cheeks as she sobbed, remembering the Buddha's rejection of her request to be ordained.

Venerable Ananda saw her, and feeling great compassion for her, gently asked, “Gotami, why are you standing outside on the porch like this?”

She replied, “Lord Ananda, it is because the Buddha does not allow the ordination for women in the Dharma and Discipline.”

Venerable Ananda said, “Then, Gotami, wait here until I ask the Buddha about this.”

He went inside and said to the Buddha, “Lord, it would be good if women could go from the house life into homelessness in the Dharma and Discipline taught by you.”

The Buddha responded, “Ananda, don’t ask for the ordination from house life to homelessness for women in the Dharma and Discipline.”

Venerable Ananda asked a second and third time, and the Buddha refused to consider it. Venerable Ananda thought, “The Buddha does not allow it. But suppose I asked him in another way?”

He said, “Lord, are women, after being ordained from house life into homelessness in the Dharma and Discipline, able to reach the first, second, or third stage of enlightenment, or the fourth stage, becoming an arahant?”

The Buddha answered, “They are, Ananda.”

Venerable Ananda said, “If that is so, Lord, then since Gotami has been extremely helpful to you when, as your mother’s sister, she was your foster mother and gave you milk when your own mother died—since that is so, Lord, it would be good if women could be ordained.”

The Buddha responded, “Ananda, if Gotami accepts eight major rules, that will count as her full ordination.” Then he announced eight rules for women to be ordained as nuns. The rules ensured that the nuns would fully respect the monks. In addition, they had to follow the same rules as the monks did.

Venerable Ananda then returned to Gotami and told her what the Buddha had said. She responded very happily, saying that she accepts the eight rules to be obeyed for the rest of her life like a person would accept a garland of flowers on her head.

Venerable Ananda told the Buddha that Gotami had accepted the rules. What about the other women who traveled with Gotami? The Buddha directed the monks to ordain them as nuns. This is how the community of nuns began.

Gotami had a daughter named Beautiful Nandā, who was the half-sister of the Buddha and who was extremely beautiful. Now that her father King Suddhōdana had died, her brother Nanda and her little nephew Rahula had become monks, and Gotami and Yashōdhara had become nuns, she felt that there was nothing much to do at the palace. So she went to her mother, Venerable Gotami, and requested to be ordained as a nun also.

However, she thought the Buddha would probably criticize beauty, and she didn’t want to be criticized. So, she never went to the Buddha to hear him teach, and instead had another nun listen to the Buddha and tell her what he had taught.

The Buddha, knowing that she avoided him because she enjoyed being beautiful and was attached to her beauty, wanted to help her. So, he made a rule that each nun should listen in person to his teachings and not send another nun to listen for her.

So, Beautiful Nandā had no other option but to go and to hear him teach. The Buddha, by his spiritual power, made an image appear only to Beautiful Nandā of an extremely beautiful woman holding a palm fan and waving it back and forth to fan the Buddha.

Shocked by this image, Beautiful Nandā, thought, “Without good reason and being careless, I didn’t go to him, yet such beautiful women go confidently around the Buddha. My beauty isn’t even one sixteenth part of her beauty, and not knowing this for such a long time I didn’t come to the Buddha!”

She stood there, gazing at the beautiful woman. The Buddha gave a Dharma teaching about the body being made of bones smeared with flesh and blood, with old age and death, arrogance and anger hidden inside it. He talked about what the body is made of inside, including fat, mucus, vomit and sweat, and said that a fool thinks of it as beautiful, but not beautiful when the body is dead.

Beautiful Nandā deeply understood his teaching, and attained the first level of enlightenment. She later became famous as the Buddhist nun with greatest skill in meditation.

A similar event was experienced by Queen Khema, the chief queen of King Bimbisara. She had golden skin, and a perfect face and body. She was very proud of her beauty, and like Nanda, she didn’t want to visit the Buddha because she suspected that he would criticize her for enjoying her beauty, and she didn’t want to be criticized.

The king, being a well-known follower of the Buddha, was not pleased that his chief queen was not also a follower of the Buddha. He wanted her to go and see the Buddha, but she wouldn’t agree to go. So, he made a plan. He requested his poets to write beautiful poems about the Bamboo Grove where the Buddha was staying, and recite them where she could hear them.

When she heard from the poets all about the wonders of the woods, flowers, butterflies and birds at Bamboo Grove, she finally said to the king that she wanted to go and see it. The king warned her,

“Go to the grove, but without having seen the Great Teacher, you will not have permission to return here.”

The king then told guards to go with her and if she returns having seen the Buddha that is good, but if she hasn’t, they must point him out to her.

The queen then went to the Bamboo Grove with the guards, and started to walk back home to the palace. The guards, as ordered by the king, led her toward the Buddha, even though she didn’t want to go.

The Buddha saw her coming, and with his spiritual power made an image of a heavenly goddess holding a palm fan, waving it around to fan him.

Queen Khema thought, "I don't feel beautiful anymore. Such a beautiful woman, like a goddess, is so close to the Buddha. I am not good enough to be her servant. My terrible mind polluted by my crazy arrogance now has been destroyed."



She sat there looking at the image of the beautiful goddess. As the queen was watching, by the Buddha's spiritual power the goddess image aged from a young woman to a middle-aged woman, then beyond middle age, and then to old age with wrinkled skin, grey hair, and broken and loose teeth. Then the very old, thin and feeble goddess stumbled around with her fan, fell down, and appeared to die. Then only the bones could be seen, which then turned into dust.

Queen Khema, shocked by the image, reflected deeply, "Even such a beautiful body comes to misfortune; my body will also

come to the very same misfortune." Realizing that she would surely lose her beauty and that the body is always getting older and one day will die, she wondered, why be so attached to it?

From that experience she gained a deep understanding of the impermanence of all things, the suffering of all beings, and that the body is not who we are. The Buddha at that moment gave a Dharma teaching, and she had such a great understanding of it that she attained the first level of enlightenment.

The Buddha then by his spiritual power made it possible for her to receive permission to be ordained as a nun. She bowed to the Buddha and returned to the palace. But, when she arrived, she didn't bow to the king as she usually did. He understood why she didn't, and asked,

"Queen, have you been to see the Great Teacher?"

"Great king, only a little spiritual wisdom has been gained by you, but I have gained the Buddha's true wisdom; you must allow me to become a nun!"

The king happily agreed, and had her carried on a golden palanquin—a seat fastened to poles held by four men—to the nuns’ residence, to be ordained as a nun.

Later, she became very famous as the Buddhist nun with the greatest wisdom.

Questions:

1. What did Queen Gotami do after the Buddha would not agree to ordain her as a nun? (She cut her hair short, wore robes, and walked all the way to where the Buddha was staying, hoping to be ordained as a nun)
2. When Venerable Ananda asked the Buddha whether women ordained as nuns are able to become arahants, did he agree that they could? (yes)
3. Why did Beautiful Nandā and Queen Khema not want to see the Buddha at first? (they thought he would criticize them for enjoying their beauty)
4. Did he criticize them? (no)
5. What image did the Buddha show to Beautiful Nandā? (a woman even more beautiful than Beautiful Nandā)
6. What image did the Buddha show to Queen Khema? (a beautiful goddess who became older and then very old and then died and became dust)

What the Buddha said:

“Passa cittakataṃ bimbaṃ, arukāyaṃ samussitaṃ, āturaṃ bahusankappaṃ, yassa natthi dhuvaṃ ṭṭiṭi.”

“See this dressed up beautiful body, but it is a mass of sores, held up by bones, it gets illnesses, and it is not permanent.”

Dhammapada 147 (11:2)

Dharma Discussion - Vanity:

Beautiful Nandā and Queen Khema enjoyed their beauty.

In other words, they were vain; they had too much vanity; they were very proud of the way they looked; they were too attached to their beauty.

Wherever they went, people would look at them, admiring their beauty, giving them special attention, making them feel important and popular.

Since ancient times, people like to look attractive, have beautiful things, and have clothes and hairstyles to make themselves look attractive.

This is natural. Even some birds admire the colorful feathers or beautiful song of another bird when choosing a mate.

But in our society, everyone seems to judge others based only on their looks, their appearance, their beauty. With this pressure, what happens to us?

For many people—males and females—their appearance is an obsession; they become addicted to the attention they get from the way they look.

They might look in the mirror very often, take many selfies and post them on social media, buy a lot of clothes or get more tattoos, always expect others to admire them, and focus on how to improve the way they look.

Their vanity—their attachment to their looks—becomes a big distraction, taking up a lot of time and money.

Even people who are always being admired are never really satisfied.

They get so used to others' admiration, reassuring them that they're special, that they expect it all the time; they want to be admired wherever they go.

And what happens as they get older?

They become very upset and anxious when they see signs of aging, like wrinkles.

For many others, the way they look distresses them even when they're young.

They're dissatisfied when they look in the mirror, they feel hurt when others criticize the way they look, they compare themselves with the way others look, and they feel jealous of others whom they think look more attractive.

They often feel unattractive and unworthy, unimportant, rejected, or unloved.

All that craving, addiction to attention, worry, dissatisfaction and stress comes from attachment to looking attractive, which comes from society's pressure.

The Buddha taught Beautiful Nandā and Queen Khema that this way of thinking—this vanity, this craving to feel attractive—is ignorance.

There always will be someone who people think looks more beautiful than us.

We only judge the outside of the body, but what about the inside?

We ignore how disgusting we would find the inside of our bodies to be.

We ignore the fact that our bodies are constantly changing, including changes from illness, injury and aging, and that one day the body definitely will die.

Nandā and Khema realized how ignorant, careless and arrogant they had been.

They felt much greater joy from wisdom than they ever felt from being admired.

Once they became nuns, what did they do about their hair and clothes?

They shaved their heads and wore robes.

They didn't have to think about how their hair and clothes look, and they no longer craved attention to satisfy a need for reassurance.

They realized that their value no longer depended on what others see on the outside of their body, their outer beauty.

They knew their value was inside—good qualities in their hearts, inner beauty.

What are some examples of good qualities? Loving-kindness, compassion, patience, tolerance, honesty, self-discipline, generosity, gratitude, peacefulness.

We are not monks or nuns, so how can we reduce our stress from the pressure of society, with others always judging us by the way we look?

Here are some helpful thoughts and reminders:

Remember that too much focus on our looks is an addiction that is stressful, wastes a lot of time and energy and doesn't lead to lasting happiness.

When we notice we are comparing our looks with others, think "let them enjoy their beauty, it doesn't last long; but good inner qualities grow and last forever."

Remember that our inner qualities are far more important and valuable and give us more peace of mind than outer beauty.

People who have inner beauty have an attractive, peaceful expression on their face that makes others around them feel relaxed. They have a smile that makes others happy and smile back, and their eyes sparkle with friendliness.

People who have outer beauty but who have a lot of anger, hatred, jealousy, selfishness or other bad qualities often have an arrogant, tense, aggressive, or artificial expression on their face.

Remember that we are not the body. The body is our vehicle, like our car, that we drive around all through our life until our body dies. Then we get a new one.

Activity - Word Search:

Find 12 words from the lesson:

K	E	N	N	A	B	Q	G	E
H	I	M	A	G	E	S	F	I
E	N	U	N	Y	A	V	A	N
M	O	L	D	C	U	A	N	N
A	O	P	A	D	T	I	M	E
V	A	N	I	T	Y	N	I	R
P	O	P	U	L	A	R	N	O

Word Box:

KHEMA	NUN	BEAUTY	VANITY	TIME	FAN
VAIN	POPULAR	NANDA	IMAGE	INNER	OLD

Chapter 20 – Battle at the River Rohini

The Sakya clan lived in Kapilavatthu, the city where the Buddha grew up as Prince Siddhartha. The Sakyas got their water for drinking, cooking, bathing and watering their food crops from a small river called the River Rohini. On the other side of the river lived the Koliya clan who also used water from the River Rohini for all of their needs.

One year there was not much rain, and the dry weather caused the River Rohini to flow with much less water than usual. The farmers of the Koliya clan and the farmers of the Sakya clan needed a lot of water for their rice crops, and they were worried that there would not be enough water and that their plants would therefore die and they would not have enough food. Already, the plants on both sides of the river were starting to wither from the hot, dry weather.

The farmers of Koliya crossed the river to meet with the Sakyan farmers. The Koliyan farmers said,

“Friends, if the small amount of water in the river is divided and shared by both of us, then neither of us will have enough to water our fields. But, our crops will soon be ready to harvest if we just water them thoroughly now. We request you to let us use this small amount of water in the river to water our fields.”

Their plan was to dig more ditches that would allow enough river water to flow into their rice fields for their rice to grow healthy and be harvested. Then they would sell some of their rice to the people of the Sakya clan so everyone would have enough to eat.

The Sakyan farmers did not like that idea. They responded,

“Friends, we can’t go begging desperately from door to door of your clan’s houses carrying baskets with gold, silver and precious jewels to offer you in return for some of your rice, while you all are sitting around at ease with plenty of rice. Our crops, too, will soon be ready to harvest and also need enough water.”

The farmers of each clan began to argue with the farmers of the other clan. Each side said,

“We are not going to give in.”

The Sakyan farmers were upset, thinking, “How dare they tell *us* to stop using water and depend on *them* for food!”

The Koliyan farmers were upset because the Sakyan farmers didn’t trust them and accept their offer. Neither side would agree to let the other have more water to grow their crops. There seemed to be no solution.

They became so frustrated and angry with each other that they started shouting. They all felt very disgusted with the farmers of the opposite clan.

One farmer started hitting a farmer from the other clan, who hit him in return. As the fight grew more intense, one Koliyan farmer shouted in anger,

“You threatened us by relying on the royal clan of Kapilavatthu. This Kapilavatthu royal clan you depend on behaves like dogs and jackals, forest animals. They don’t even have proper wives—they just marry their own sisters! What harm can their armies do to us?”

The farmers of the Sakya clan responded angrily, “You threatened us by relying on your wretched people who are diseased with leprosy! The Koliya people who you depend on are living a miserable life ever since they were kicked out of the city and were living like animals in the Kola trees. What harm can their armies do to us?”

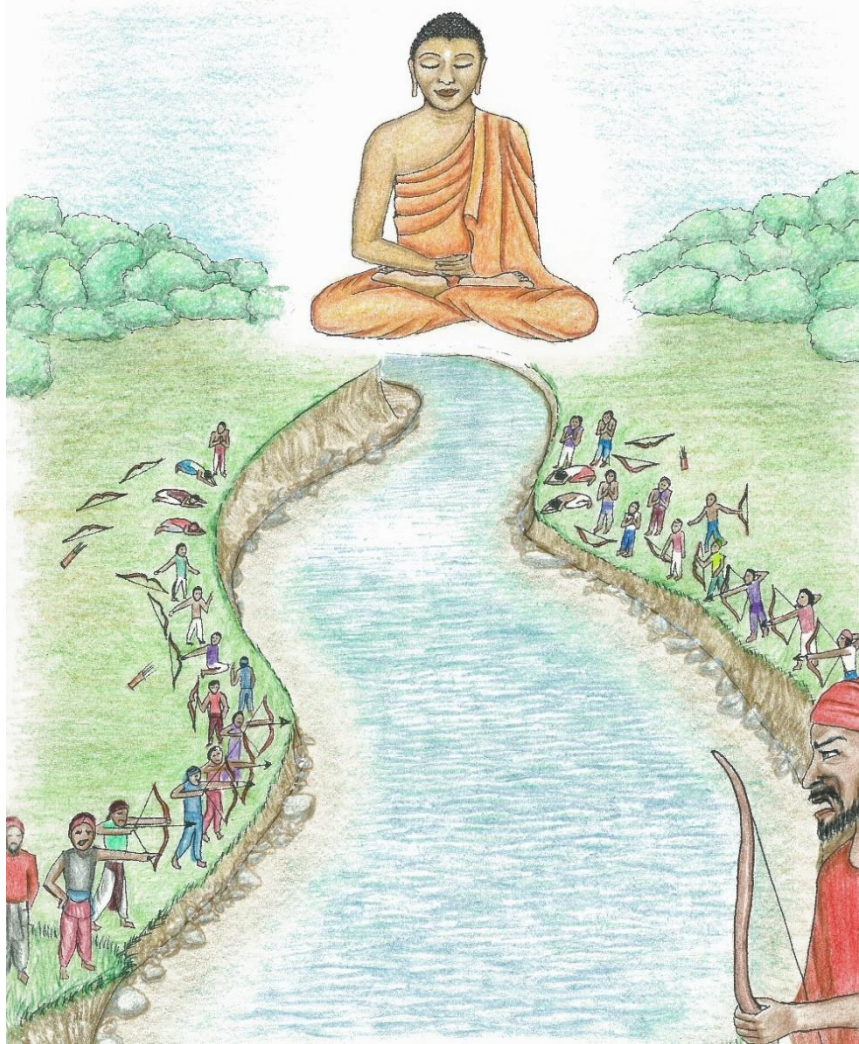
These insults to their clans infuriated the farmers so much that they left the meeting. To accuse people of marrying their own sisters was horribly offensive, and to allege that people were kicked out of the city for having the frightful disease of leprosy and that they lived in trees like monkeys was equally offensive. The Koliyan farmers reported the fight to the ministers of agriculture in the Koliya clan, who then reported it to the Koliyan royal family. And the Sakyas reported the fight to the ministers of agriculture in Kapilavatthu, who then reported it to the Sakyan royal family.

The ministers and royal families of each clan were outraged, extremely angry and totally disgusted with the other clan when they heard about the insults. How could they insult them like that? They each felt that they wanted to destroy the other clan and never have to see them again. So, they each planned and prepared for war against the other.

The Buddha, far away in Savatthi, looked around as usual at sunrise with his supernatural power, and could see the people of Kapilavatthu and Koliya preparing for battle. He could see that it would start that evening. The two royal families were his closest relatives: his father was from the Sakya clan of Kapilavatthu and his mother came from the Koliya clan. He knew that he could prevent the battle from happening, save people from killing each other, and lead them to peace by teaching the Dharma.

He went out to receive food in his bowl from people in the town as usual, and then he spent the day sitting in a special room in meditation. Toward evening, he left the room. And suddenly, he was sitting many miles away in the sky over the River Rohini, between the armies of Sakyans and Koliyans. He made dark-blue rays of light radiate from his hair, causing the sky to look darker and making the scene look more ominous.

It frightened the warriors, who couldn’t see him and didn’t know what was happening.



Next, he sent out five colors of light rays from his body, and finally, he made his form—sitting cross-legged in the sky above the river—visible to all the warriors.

The Sakyans and Koliyans were shocked to see him floating in the air above them. However, they had seen or heard about his supernatural powers before, so they knew it was indeed the Buddha.

When the Sakyans saw him, they thought, “The Buddha, who is our own relative, has come. Maybe he knows everything about our fight.”

They talked among themselves and decided, “Shooting weapons and

killing others isn’t the right thing to do in front of the Buddha. Let the Koliyans kill us or take us captive if they want.”

They dropped their weapons on the ground and bowed to the Buddha.

The Koliyans talked among themselves and made the same decision. They dropped their weapons and bowed to the Buddha.

The Buddha then gracefully came down from the sky and sat on the shore of the river. He asked,

“Why have you all come to this place?”

The king of Kapilavatthu and the king of Koliya both stepped forward. One of them said, “Most exalted Buddha, we haven’t come here to look at the river.”

The other king said, "Lord, we haven't come here to swim in the river. In fact, we have come here to make war against each other."

The Buddha said, "Your royal highnesses, what is the actual cause of your fight?"

One king said, "Water of this Rohini stream is the actual cause of it."

The Buddha asked, "Your royal highnesses, what is the value of water of this Rohini stream?"

"It is of little value," the kings said.

"What is the value of the Earth?" the Buddha asked.

"Its value is priceless, Lord," the kings said.

The Buddha asked them, "What is the value of the people of your clan?"

They responded, "Their value is priceless, Lord."

The Buddha said, "For some water in this Rohini stream that is of so little value, why do you wish to destroy the priceless people by fighting each other? Not the slightest amount of pleasure can be found in worthless conflicts and wasteful fights."

The Buddha gave them a talk on the Dharma. He taught them about the harm of making enemies and hatred. He taught them that when they are anxious to get what they want and they fight over it, insult each other and develop hatred, they live with the disease of unhappiness. He told them that they are living with hatred, but that he is free from hatred; that they are developing selfishness and the feeling that others are enemies, but that he is free from developing selfishness and enemies.

The people of both clans felt ashamed of their foolishness, apologized and made peace with each other. They felt extremely grateful to the Buddha for intervening and preventing them from killing each other, destroying both of the clans. He had saved them from a huge tragedy.

They knew that the Buddha—their own relative—had given up the possibility of becoming a great king and enjoying all the luxuries, pleasures and powers that a king would have, and instead decided to become an ascetic and a monk. They thought it was therefore appropriate to offer him young men from the royal families to become his student monks. So, the Sakyans and the Koliyans each offered the Buddha 250 princes for him to ordain as monks.

The Buddha ordained them, and then led all of them each day either to Kapilavatthu or to Koliya to receive food in their bowls. The people on both sides of the river offered them plenty of food, so, after all, there was enough water for each clan to grow and harvest healthy crops.

The princes at first didn't like living as monks. They thought it was boring and that it was difficult to adjust to the strict lifestyle. They felt that they had only become monks because they couldn't refuse the requests of their parents and relatives. But after the Buddha gave several talks on the Dharma, they were very satisfied as monks, and attained the first stage of enlightenment, along with some supernatural powers.

Questions:

1. What were the Sakyans and Koliyans worried about that made them argue? (they worried that there was not enough water in the river for the crops of both clans)
2. What did the Koliyan farmers propose to the Sakyan farmers? (they would use more water from the river for their rice plants and sell some of their rice to the Sakyans)
3. Why didn't the Sakyans agree to that proposal? (they didn't want to depend on the Koliyans for food, begging them for it and paying for it)
4. After some farmers hit each other and the fight became more intense, what did the farmers of each clan do? (they insulted the other clan)
5. What made the ministers and royal families so angry? (the insults about their clan)
6. What did the Buddha show them was more important, the water or the people? (the people)

What the Buddha said:

“Māvoca pharusam kañci, vuttā paṭivadeyyu taṃ, dukkhā hi sārambhakathā, paṭidaṇḍā phuseyyu taṃ.”

Do not speak harshly to anyone, because if you do, they may speak harshly back to you. Angry speech hurts, and retaliation may overtake you.”

Dhammapada 133 (10:5)

Dharma Discussion – Harsh Speech:

Why did the farmers get into a conflict?

They were worried that there wasn't enough water, that they wouldn't get what they need, and that the farmers from the other clan were being unfair.

What happened when they couldn't agree on a solution?

They fought and insulted each other's clan.

What exactly is an insult? Words intended to make a person feel embarrassed, ashamed, unworthy, unattractive, or foolish. Words used as a personal attack, criticizing a person's intelligence, ability, or the way they look, the way they speak, or what they do. And offensive or mean words about someone's identity, family, or something or someone they love. Insults are different from constructive criticism, which is intended to be helpful.

In Buddhism, we practice Right Speech as one part of the Eightfold Path.

Right Speech includes avoiding harsh speech.

Harsh speech includes not just insults but also intentionally hurtful criticism, bad words, racist words; hateful, offensive, rude or disrespectful words, or any words meant to hurt another person.

Why is it important to avoid harsh speech?

So that we avoid hurting others and creating bad karma—the causes for negative results in our future.

And so that we become more kind and compassionate to others, creating peace and happiness around us.

There are also other reasons to avoid harsh speech. Can you think of any?

When you insult someone or use harsh speech against someone, what might they do to you in return? Retaliate—take revenge—as in the story.

How might they take revenge? Insult you in return, fight, spread rumors, turn friends against you, damage your belongings, embarrass you, steal from you.

Some people cannot take insults; they cannot handle feeling shame, so they become enraged and take revenge in particularly shocking or harmful ways.

When someone takes revenge on you, naturally you might feel upset or angry. And what might that lead to? Behavior that you regret later.

There is another reason to avoid harsh speech. It reveals weakness!

When in an argument, if a person feels they're not winning, they can't persuade the other person, or they can't get the person to agree, they may get angry.

And then what do they do? They start shouting. For some people, shouting isn't enough. They try to intimidate or overpower the other person.

They're trying to hide the fact that they're losing the argument. They have no more reasonable words to say; they can't think of anything intelligent to say.

Or they're too angry to think clearly.

This is when they are weak—they're losing the argument, or just too angry.

And that's when they resort to insults or other harsh speech, or violence.

So, when we're in an argument, we don't want to get so angry that we use insults or other harsh speech. What can we do to avoid letting it get to that point?

Remember how hurtful insults can be. Some people remember for the rest of their life the harsh or insulting words that someone said to them.

Keep in mind that harsh speech leads others to take revenge.
Remember that we are admitting our own weakness when we use harsh speech.
And remember that we will suffer the karmic results of our harsh speech.
What should we do instead, when an argument is getting out of control?
It's better to walk away, stay silent or say "let's discuss this later."
You can continue the discussion when tempers have cooled down.
Remember, it takes two people to argue, so you *can* stop it.

What if someone insults you or uses harsh speech against you?
Silence can be the best weapon – when we're silent, the other person notices how outrageous they're acting.
We can say, "I don't want to argue anymore," or "that's your opinion."
Or we can pretend to agree, mirroring back what they are saying, for example, "yes I am exactly what you just called me."
Can you think of some other ways to respond without anger?

How can we calm our anger when someone insults us?
Remember that an insult is only a reflection of that person's own frustration, anger, ignorance, jealousy, or hatred—his own weakness and ugly emotion.
We don't want to join in with that weakness and let it bring us down.
We make ourselves stronger if we can resist the urge to retaliate and use harsh speech against them. Instead, we can try to feel compassion for their frustration.
So, the person insulting us actually is helping us to become a better person!

Activity - Role play:

Two students choose a topic for an argument, and then debate opposing views on the topic, as if representing their "clan" or friends with the same view. One partner then pretends to get angry and says something insulting – not personal insults or bad language, but only silly or general insults for the purpose of the role play (for example, "you all are big babies," or losers, fools, ignorant, selfish, lazy, bullies, or nerds). The other partner tries to deescalate the argument—responds without anger, using words that they would realistically use in talking with peers, or stays silent or walks away.

Suggestions for topics of argument:

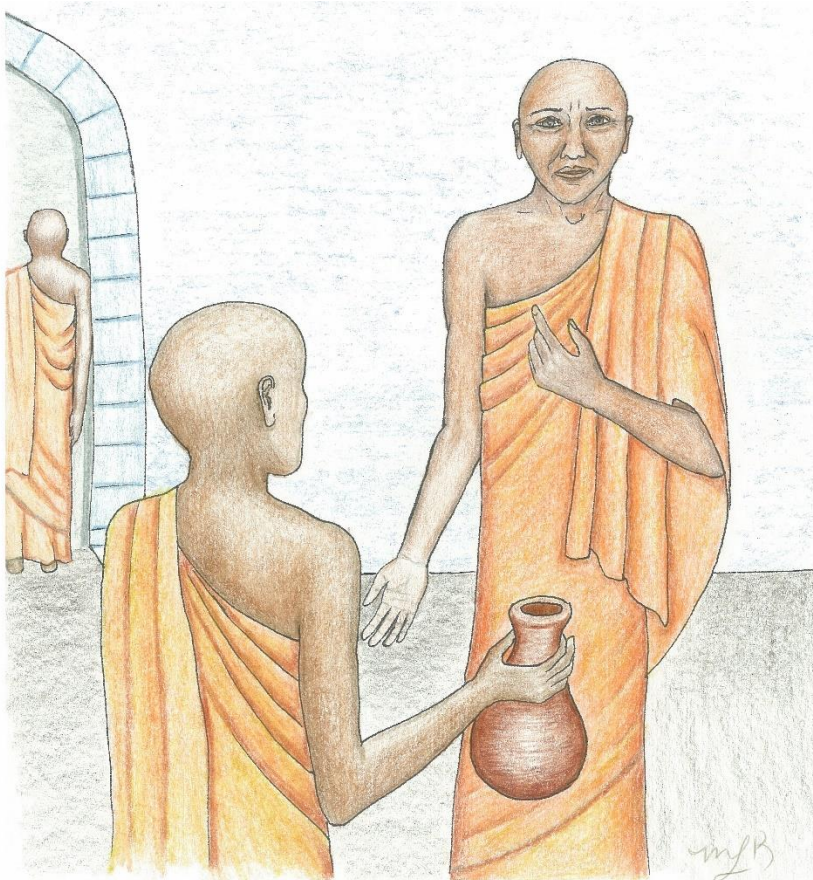
Whether school should start (and end) later in the day
whether to require more hours per day at school but attend school 4 days a week
whether all school lunches should be vegetarian (or vegan)
whether students should be required to dissect dead animals in science class
whether to have a dress code or no dress code at school
whether to prohibit gum chewing in class.

Chapter 21 – The Quarrel at Kosambi

There was a monastery in the town of Kosambi which became the scene of a big argument and conflict – and misbehavior - among monks. It started with just a tiny mistake.

There were two senior monks at the monastery. Each of them had a group of younger monks whom they mentored and taught. One was a teacher who taught the other monks the Buddha's teachings, and the other was an expert in the Buddha's rules for monks. The Buddha over the years had created a long list of rules for Buddhist monks to follow so they would develop discipline, self-control, humility and other good qualities.

One day, the teacher monk went to the bathroom and left a pot of clean water in the bathroom. The rules expert went into the bathroom afterward and found the pot of water that had been left there. He had noticed that the last person who used the bathroom was the teacher. So he went over to the teacher and asked,



“Did you leave the pot of water in there?”

The teacher replied, “Yes.”

The rules expert said, “You didn’t know it was a violation of the rules?”

The teacher answered, “No, I didn’t.”

The rules expert said, “It is a violation, friend.”

The teacher responded, “Then I will admit my mistake.”

The rules expert then explained, “But if you didn’t intend to do it and it was because of forgetfulness,

then there was no violation.”

The teacher just walked away without saying anything, thinking to himself, “Okay, then I didn’t do anything wrong; I didn’t violate any rules.”

There was a group of young monks sitting nearby who had heard this discussion, and who were students of the rules expert. He commented to his students, "This teacher doesn't know when he has committed a violation."

The students admired their mentor, the rules expert. They liked to try to prove to the other young monks at the monastery, who were students of the teacher monk, that their mentor was better.

This situation that they just witnessed seemed like a perfect opportunity to prove it. So they went over to the teacher monk's students and started a conversation. One of them said,

"Your teacher has violated the rules, but he thinks that he didn't."

The students of the teacher monk were surprised and didn't know what to say. They went to their teacher, hoping he could explain the situation. One of them said, "Venerable sir, the other students said that you violated the rules but that you don't admit it."

The teacher monk was so shocked to hear that! He had admitted the mistake at first, but then the rules expert said there was no violation if it was unintentional, so how can he say this now? He told his students,

"The rules expert said to me that there was no violation, and now he says that there was a violation! So, he is a liar."

The students felt reassured by their teacher's explanation, and were upset and disgusted by the rules expert blaming their teacher for a violation after telling him there wasn't any violation. They couldn't wait to tell the other students that their mentor was no good. So, they went immediately to the rules expert's students and said,

"Your teacher is a liar."

The rules expert's students went directly to their mentor and exclaimed, "Can you believe, they called you a liar!"

The rules expert was not going to tolerate this impertinence. He thought that he must put a stop to this arrogant and egoistic behavior. So, he called a meeting with other senior monks from a monastery nearby to discuss whether the teacher monk should be punished.

The senior monks had a discussion, and then they went to speak with the teacher monk. They said to him,

"Friend, you have committed a violation. Do you see that you have committed a violation?"

The teacher monk, having accidentally forgotten to remove the pot of water after he was finished using the bathroom, thought there was no violation. He said,

“Friends, I have committed no violation, as far as I know.”

The rules expert along with the other senior monks agreed to suspend the teacher monk from the monastery even though he still didn't believe that he had committed a violation.

Suspending the he teacher monk was a very harsh punishment, especially because he was not just an average monk. He had studied the Dharma for many years, and he was not only an expert in the Dharma but he also was very knowledgeable about the rules that the Buddha had set for the monks. He was wise, understanding, and humble; he followed the rules and wanted to continue his advanced training as a monk. He couldn't allow himself to be kicked out of the monastery! He went to his close friends and told them what happened. He said,

“This is no violation, this is not a violation! I have not violated anything! So I am not suspended. I have been suspended by a wrongful act of those monks. I have been suspended for no reason, so the suspension is invalid. I hope you will take my side on this.”

His friends understood him and agreed that it was wrong for him to be suspended. He sent messages to his friends all over the country, so they also would support him.

A group of monks who supported the teacher monk went to meet with the rules expert and others agreeing to the suspension, and explained that the suspension was unfair and invalid. The rules expert and his team firmly stood by their view that the suspension was indeed appropriate, and said,

“Let's not support and follow a monk who has been suspended.”

Nevertheless, the friends of the teacher monk and all the monks who agreed with him loyally continued to support and follow him.

One day a certain monk went to the Buddha who was staying near the monastery, and told him about this big disagreement. The Buddha was very concerned, and said,

“There will be a split in the Sangha. There will be a split in the community of monks.”

The Buddha got up from his seat and went to the rules expert and his team of monks who had suspended the teacher monk. They offered him a seat and the Buddha advised them,

“Monks, don't suspend a monk just because you think he should be suspended. For example, suppose a monk has made a mistake and doesn't believe that it was his fault or that he did anything wrong, but other monks do believe he did wrong. Monks, you know how serious it is to create a split in the Sangha. You should not punish that monk when he doesn't believe that it was his fault. If you do punish him, then it will lead to disagreements, arguments, quarrelling, and fights. It will lead to a split in the community of monks - two groups that cannot agree with each other.”

The Buddha then visited the monks who supported the teacher monk. After taking a seat they prepared for him, he advised them,

“Monks, don’t think that when you make a mistake that you need not apologize or fix the mistake just because you believe it wasn’t your fault or you didn’t do anything wrong. For example, suppose you make a mistake and you believe it’s not your fault, but other monks think it is your fault. Monks, you know how serious it is to create a split in the Sangha. You should admit the mistake in order to be considerate to the other monks. It would be absurd to cause anger, hatred, fear, arguing and fighting just because you didn’t admit the mistake. It will lead to a split in the community of monks.”

After he gave this advice to help all the monks be more understanding of each other and to be more peaceful and harmonious with each other, the Buddha got up and went away.

Questions:

1. Did the teacher monk leave the pot of water in the bathroom on purpose or because he forgot? (because he forgot)
2. Why did he think he didn’t violate the monks’ rules? (the rules expert said if he didn’t intend to violate the rules, or if it was because of forgetfulness, then it isn’t a violation)
3. What did the teacher monk say to his students about the rules expert? (that he was a liar)
4. What did the rules expert do after he heard that the teacher monk’s students called him a liar? (called a meeting with other monks to discuss whether he should be punished)
5. What was the Buddha trying to avoid in the community of monks? (a split)
6. Did the Buddha agree that the teacher monk should be punished? (no)

What the Buddha said:

“Na paresaṃ vilomāni, na paresaṃ katākataṃ, attano va avekkheyya, katāni akatāni ca.”
“Do not find fault with others, do not watch what others do or did not do. But let us see our own acts, what we do and what we fail to do.”

Dhammapada 50 (4:7)

Dharma Discussion – Admitting Mistakes:

How do you feel when you see someone make a mistake, for example, doing something embarrassing, bad or clumsy, or saying something wrong or foolish?

Maybe we laugh, or maybe we feel glad that we didn't make that mistake.

Or maybe we feel compassion for them.

When we see television shows with people making mistakes, being bad, or misbehaving, it's funny or entertaining.

But how do you feel if you make a mistake?

Maybe we can laugh at ourselves. But usually, we don't feel so good about it.

No one wants to feel they are "bad," wrong, or foolish.

So, sometimes it's hard to admit that we made a mistake. We might make an excuse or blame it on someone else to try to avoid guilt.

What did the Buddha teach the monks to do when they make a mistake?

They must admit their mistakes - even if it wasn't their fault, or even if they didn't intend to do anything wrong.

Why was it so important? To avoid anger, arguments and fighting.

Is his teaching only for monks? No, it applies to us, too.

When we make a mistake that might have upset or annoyed another person - for example, if we break something, if we say something that was inconsiderate, or if we didn't do something we promised to do - it's important to apologize, even if we didn't intend to do anything wrong or hurt anyone.

Should we just say "I'm sorry"?

If we just say "sorry" automatically without really meaning it, it seems that you don't really care.

Should we say "I didn't mean it" or "It wasn't my fault," or we blame someone else? This is not enough. It's only defending ourselves without acknowledging how the other person feels.

They still may feel upset with you, which may lead to arguments or fights later.

When you make a mistake that might have offended, disappointed or hurt someone, it's important to connect with the other person from the heart - with compassion - understanding their feelings.

Your eye contact, words and actions should show that you care about them and that you want to try to undo the mistake.

If you made an innocent mistake, you can say with kindness, "I didn't intend to hurt you, it was a mistake and I'm really sorry." Then they might be able to forgive you.

Sometimes we make a mistake that may be offensive or upsetting to others but there isn't any opportunity or appropriate way to apologize.

We should still pay attention to those mistakes, admit them to ourselves, and have remorse - regret that we did the mistake - and determine not to do it again.

For example, each group of young monks in the story should have noticed their mistake of criticizing the other monks' mentor. They should have felt remorse and determined not to do it again.

Although we would rather see others' mistakes than our own, the Buddha teaches us that it's important for us to notice our own mistakes.

Notice that when we point our finger at others' mistakes, there are three fingers of our hand pointing back at us – pointing at our own mistakes.

That means when we point out someone else's wrongdoing, then we should look three times more at our own wrongdoing.

Of course, it's uncomfortable to feel guilty or shameful about our mistakes.

But we can fix mistakes and not repeat them only if we notice them to begin with.

If we ignore our mistakes - if we think they don't matter - will they disappear? No. We won't learn from them, so we will do them over and over again.

When we are honest with ourselves, noticing our mistakes and wrongdoing, then we can stop doing wrong and stop making those mistakes.

Noticing our mistakes turns into a good habit of correcting ourselves.

The more mistakes we notice, the more we can correct ourselves, improve ourselves, and the better we become.

So, making mistakes – and being aware of them - is a good thing!

Instead of feeling bad about them, feel good that you noticed them!

Activity - Noting mistakes:

Can you think of any mistakes you made over the past week? Did you have any quarrels with sisters or brothers? Did you do forget to do something your parents asked you to do? Did you disobey your parents? Did you watch too much TV? Did you say anything that was untrue? Did you say any angry words? Did a teacher have to ask you to stop talking in class?

Chapter 22 – Quarrel at Kosambi, Part 2

After the quarrel between two groups of monks in the monastery in Kosambi, the Buddha taught them that when they make a mistake, they should admit it even if they believe it's not their fault, to prevent anger and conflicts that might result if they don't admit their mistakes. After he taught them, he left the monastery and stayed at another place some distance away.

Despite the good advice given by the Buddha, the disputes and quarreling among the monks got worse. They argued loudly and forcefully. They shouted and used angry words and insults. Groups of monks quarreled with each other, making a very noisy clamor. They could not resolve their disagreements. Instead of a peaceful monastery, it was a hostile atmosphere to live in.

One of the monks went to the Buddha, hoping that he could help bring an end to this disaster. He described to the Buddha what was going on at the monastery - the anger, shouting, insults, and stubborn refusal to stop the arguments – and he pleaded,

“Lord, it would be good if, out of your compassion, you would go to visit those monks.”

The Buddha agreed to visit. He went to the monks at Kosambi and told them, “Enough, monks, no quarrelling, no bickering, no fighting, no disputing.”

In reply, one monk said, “Lord, Blessed One, master of the Dharma, please wait, please just live here pleasantly. And don't concern yourself with this. We are the ones who will be known for this disputing and quarreling.”

Again, the Buddha told the monks to stop their quarreling, bickering, fighting and disputing.

Rather than agreeing to stop, the monks gave the same response. The Buddha told them to stop for the third time. Again, the monks did not agree to stop, but again just requested that he stay with them and not get involved in their disputes.

The Buddha thought, “These misguided men seem obsessed. It is impossible to make them see the wrong that they are doing.” Then he got up and went away.

The next morning, he got dressed, took his bowl, and walked into the town of Kosambi to receive offerings of food for breakfast. After he ate, he said aloud,

“When many voices are shouting, no one thinks,
'I'm being a fool, I also took part in this fight, I helped cause this.'
They forget to speak with wisdom;
they talk with their minds obsessed by words alone.
With uncontrolled mouths, they shout as they please.
None of them even knows what leads him to do this.

“They think, ‘He abused me, he hit me, he robbed me.’

But hatred is never calmed in those who like to feel hatred toward enemies. Hatred surely is calmed in those who don’t like having enemies, who don’t like hating others.

Hatred is never calmed by hatred. It is calmed by harmony and understanding. Those others aren’t aware that they should restrain themselves;

they aren’t aware that they should have self-control.

Still, there are some who are aware, so their quarrels are calmed and resolved.”

As if he was speaking to the quarreling monks, the Buddha said aloud:

“People who beat and murder others, people who steal cattle, horses and wealth - although they are focused on those terrible actions, even they can get along with each other. So why can’t you get along too?

The Buddha then spoke as if giving advice to those who don’t like to quarrel:

“If you can find a friend whom you can trust, who is both virtuous and unwavering, then keep company with him.

Being content and mindful, you can overcome any threat of danger.

“If you cannot find a friend whom you can trust, who is virtuous and unwavering, then, like a king who leaves behind a conquered kingdom, walk like an elephant in the woods alone.

It’s better to walk alone than to have friendships with fools.

There is no real friendship with fools.

Walk alone, and harm no one, and you will have no conflict.

Be like an elephant in the woods alone.”

Later, the Buddha went away to the Eastern Bamboo Park to visit three monks living there: Venerable Anuruddha, Venerable Nandiya, and Venerable Kimbila. When he arrived, the park security guard saw the Buddha coming and said,

“Don’t go into this park, monk. There are three men living here, trying to be good people. Don’t disturb them.”

Ven. Anuruddha heard him speaking to the Buddha and said, “Friend, security guard, don’t keep the Blessed One out. He is our own teacher who has come.”

Ven Anuruddha called the other two monks, who were meditating in the forest, “Come out, venerable sirs, come out! Our teacher has come!”

The three of them went to meet the Buddha. One set down the Buddha’s bowl and outer robe, one prepared a seat for him, and one gave him a bowl of water for washing his feet, to make him comfortable in accordance with the customs in India. They bowed to him and sat down.

The Buddha said, "I hope that all of you are well, Anuruddha, that you are comfortable and that you have no trouble getting food offerings."

Ven. Anuruddha replied, "We are well, Blessed One, we are comfortable and we have no trouble getting food offerings."

The Buddha said further, "I hope that you all live in harmony, Anuruddha, as friendly and peaceful as milk with water, viewing each other with eyes filled with kindness."

"Surely we do, Lord," Ven. Anuruddha replied.

"But Anuruddha, how do you live in peace and harmony with each other?" the Buddha asked.

Ven. Anuruddha replied, "Lord, I think that it is so fortunate that I am living with such friends. My thoughts, words and deeds are always with lovingkindness toward these monks both in public and when we are alone here. I think, why should I do only what I want to do, why not do what they would like to do? And I act according to this. We are different in body, but we are only one in our minds, I think."

Ven. Nandiya and Ven. Kimbila each said something similar. They added, "Lord, that is how we live in harmony, as friendly and peaceful as milk and water, viewing each other with eyes filled with kindness."

The Buddha responded, "Good, good, Anuruddha. I hope you all live diligent and self-controlled?"

"Surely we do, Lord," he affirmed.

The Buddha asked, "But Anuruddha, how do you do that?"

He replied, "Lord, whichever one of us returns first from the village with their food gets the seats ready, sets out drinking water and water for washing, and puts the garbage bucket in its place. Whichever of us returns last eats any food left over if he wishes, cleans up and puts everything away and sweeps the area. Whoever notices that the pots of water for drinking, for washing or for the bathroom are low or empty, fills them up. If any are too heavy for him, he calls another one of us over to help. We regularly talk together about the Dharma. It is in this way that we live diligent and self-controlled."

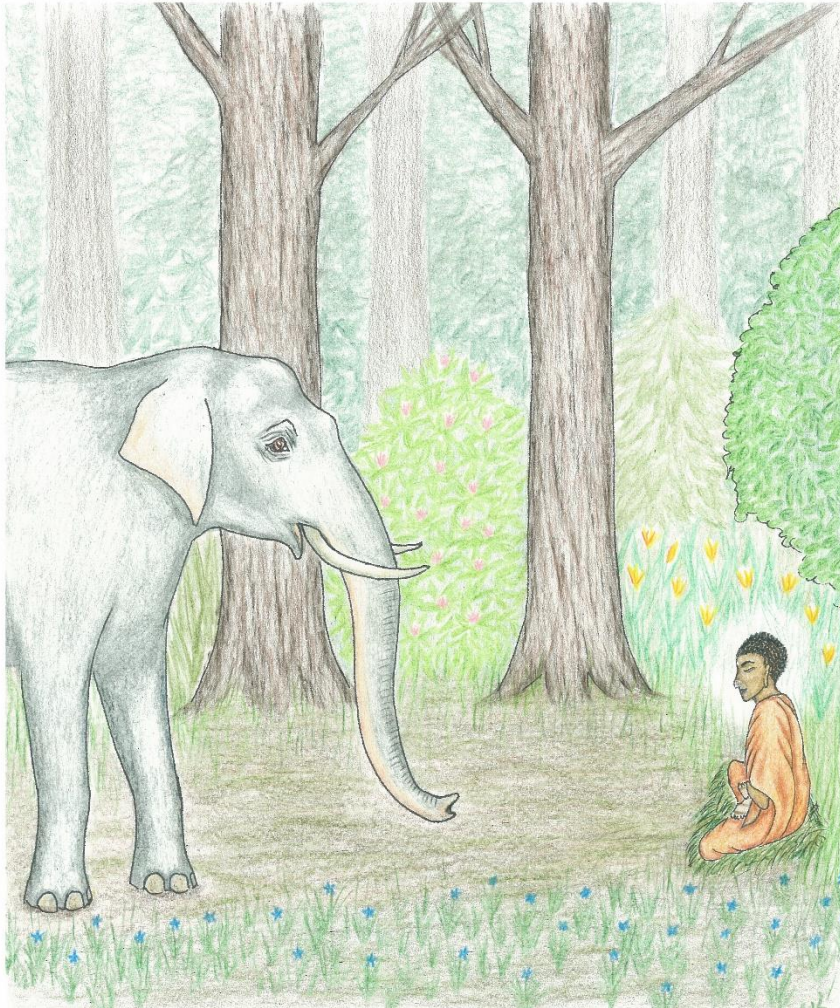
Because of their lovingkindness, care and respect for each other - such that whenever one of them notices anything that needs to be done he immediately does it, and they all happily do their daily work to help and support each other - they never had any quarrels or resentment.

After the Buddha gave them some instruction in the Dharma, he continued his journey, walking alone. He decided to stay in a jungle area for a while. As he was sitting alone, he thought,

“I was living in discomfort, pestered by those monks at Kosambi who argue, quarrel, dispute and fight. Now I am alone and without any companion, living in peace and comfort, away from all of them.”

Nearby in the jungle there was an elephant who was being pestered by the other elephants in the herd. He had only trampled grass and broken-up bits of branches to eat, and dirty water to drink, living with the herd. As he came up out of the river to bathe, his body was pushed around by other elephants. Considering this situation, the elephant thought,

“Why shouldn’t I live alone, away from this crowd?”



So, he left the herd and went to where the Buddha was staying in the jungle. When he saw the Buddha sitting there, the elephant brought roots and leaves for him to eat, and filled his trunk with water and put it in the Buddha’s bowl for him to drink. He cleared leaves away with his trunk to make a smooth area for the Buddha to walk.

Interestingly, the Buddha had just a short time ago thought about an elephant - that when one has no friend whom one can trust and who is virtuous, one should be alone, like an elephant alone in the woods.

The elephant thought, “I

was living pestered by the other elephants, and now, alone and away from the herd, I live peacefully and in comfort, away from all those elephants.”

The Buddha was aware of what the elephant was thinking, and said aloud, “The elephant agrees with this one here. The elephant with long tusks lives happily alone in the woods. Our hearts are in harmony.”

Meanwhile, in Kosambi, the villagers noticed that the Buddha had left the town, and they thought, "These monks here are doing us great harm. They have pestered the Buddha until he went away. Let's ignore them and not honor or respect them anymore, and let's not give them any more food even when they come for it. Then they will either leave or correct themselves with the Buddha."

So, when they saw the monks in the village, they looked away rather than politely greeting the monks. They didn't answer their doors when the monks stood waiting outside their houses. And sure enough, being ignored by the villagers, the monks knew they had to do something, so they decided to visit the Buddha and settle their quarrel.

When they arrived, the teacher monk who had been suspended thought about what had happened: "I *did* violate the rules, and I *was* properly suspended."

He then shared that thought with his friends, and they went over to the group of monks who had suspended him, and repeated what he had said. That group of monks then reported it to the Buddha. Because the teacher monk admitted his mistake, everyone agreed that his suspension was over and he was allowed back into the Sangha, the community of monks. The quarrel was over.

Questions:

1. When the Buddha told the monks to stop fighting, what did they say? (that he should just live peacefully with them and not get involved in their disputes)
2. What negative emotion is calmed by harmony and understanding? (hatred)
3. If we can't find a friend who is virtuous and whom you can trust, what does the Buddha say we should do? (be alone like an elephant in the woods)
4. How did Ven. Anuruddha and the other two monks live so peacefully together? (their lovingkindness, care and respect for each other, and whenever one notices that something that needs to be done he does it, and they happily do their daily work to support and help each other)
5. How did the Buddha and the elephant feel when they were alone in the forest? (peaceful)
6. What finally happened to the teacher monk? (he admitted his mistake and was accepted back into the Sangha)

What the Buddha said:

“No ce labhetha nipakaṃ saḥāyaṃ, saddhiṃ caraṃ sādhuviḥāridhīraṃ, rājā va ratṭhaṃ vijitaṃ pahāya, eko care mātagaraññe va nāgo.”

“If you cannot find a wise friend who leads a virtuous life, then, like a king who leaves a conquered kingdom, or like a lone elephant in the forest, you should go your way alone.

Dhammapada 329 (23:10)

Dharma Discussion - Peace:

How do big quarrels start?

In the story, there was a misunderstanding between the rules expert and the teacher monk, when the rules expert said there was no violation if the mistake wasn't intentional, and the teacher monk didn't respond.

They each thought they were correct and the other was wrong.

This is a typical start of a quarrel. Have you ever been in a conflict that started this way?

Everyone has experienced this.

We like to be right, and when someone disagrees, we like to show that he's wrong.

And sometimes we feel offended when others say we are wrong.

A conflict escalates into a quarrel when someone can't stand to be wrong and feels terribly offended and angry when someone disagrees with them.

This feeling begins from childhood, from the time when children always seek parents' and teachers' approval for saying or doing the right thing, and when they're afraid of being wrong - they can't stand feeling ashamed when they're wrong.

Most of us grow up learning that we all make mistakes, and that even if we are wrong, it's okay; we are still loved and respected. When we make a mistake, we admit it and others can forgive us and they still respect us. And we forgive others and respect them when they admit their mistakes.

Some people don't learn this, so they always need to prove to everyone that they are right and anyone who disagrees is wrong, or they always blame others for anything that goes wrong.

This causes a lot of quarrels!

So, the Buddha taught us that to live peacefully, we must accept that sometimes we make mistakes and that sometimes we are wrong, and not always blame others or quarrel when others disagree with us.

What else can we do to keep a peaceful environment when we are with others?

In this story, what did the three monks - Ven. Anuruddha and his friends - do keep peace among each other, to avoid conflicts?

They immediately did whatever work needed to be done, without waiting for someone else to start. They divided up the work among themselves fairly, without arguing about who was doing the easier or harder work.

With their words and actions, they showed that they cared about the others, that they wanted everyone to be comfortable.

They didn't insist on doing what they wanted, but considered what the others might like to do.

Do you do that with the people you live with, your family members?

Can you give some examples of doing whatever work needs to be done, without being asked to do it? Or how you divide up work with your sister or brother?

By practicing with your family, you will be better able to do this in other environments as you get older, such as at your workplace and with roommates.

Also, to live peacefully, we can choose friends who are easier to get along with.

Can you describe some qualities that these friends have? Kindness, compassion, honesty, patience, tolerance, not arrogant or selfish.

But of course, there are times when those around us are not showing those qualities, when they are causing trouble or quarreling.

What should you do, leave, or stay with them?

If you stay, there is a risk that you get involved in the misbehavior too. Remember, one person's misbehavior easily spreads to others who associate with him or her.

Even among the monks in the story - who were practicing Dharma and were learning to live disciplined lives – the misbehavior of some monks spread to others when they joined in with the shouting and fighting.

If you leave, you are giving them a message that you don't like their behavior.

Maybe they will notice that they are annoying.

In the story, the Kosambi monks didn't seem to get the message that they are annoying when the Buddha left; they just kept fighting. But they finally got the message when the villagers ignored them.

Have you ever decided to leave your friends when they are quarreling or misbehaving? How did you feel when you left?

Did you feel left out or lonely? Did you worry about what other kids might think when you are by yourself? Did you worry about losing your friends?

Sometimes it's difficult to leave.

But the Buddha's words in this story give us strength to feel it's okay to be alone: we can walk away alone, feeling strong and confident like an elephant, or like a wise king or like the Buddha. Then people with good qualities will respect you for having the strength and independence to get away from trouble.

Activity – clay sculpture:

Form a piece of modeling clay into an elephant. Use a picture or toy elephant as a model. Use toothpicks and popsicle sticks for shaping the clay. Eyes can be made with tiny beads or seeds. Ears can be made by flattening two small balls of clay and sticking them onto the head using a popsicle stick as a trowel. Trunk, tail and tusks can be made by rolling a piece of clay into the shape of a rope, then sticking it on the body using a popsicle stick as a trowel.

Chapter 23 – The Story of Angulimala

There was once a boy called Ahimsaka, which means “one who does no harm.” But when he grew older, he became violent and did not seem to care about any living beings. He became a well-known robber and murderer in the kingdom of Kosala. When he murdered someone, he cut off one of their fingers and wore it on a necklace of many fingers around his neck, so he was then called Angulimala, which means finger-necklace. The people of the villages and towns in the kingdom heard about him and were frightened. They traveled only in large groups to avoid being murdered.

One morning, the Buddha took his bowl and went to the town of Savatthi to receive food from the villagers. After his meal, he started walking down a road where Angulimala was hiding. As he walked, he passed by several people – shepherds, cowherds, farmers and travelers. Each of them warned him,

“Do not take this road, monk! On this road there is the bandit Angulimala! Men in groups of ten, twenty, thirty and even forty have traveled on this road, and all of them have been killed by Angulimala!”

But the Buddha just continued walking down the road in silence. With his enlightened mind, he could see when someone had a mind that was ready to listen to him and understand his teaching. He knew he could teach Angulimala, and had no fear.

Angulimala saw the Buddha coming in the distance, and he was surprised that a monk would come alone. He thought,

“How wonderful, how marvelous! Men have come along this road in groups of forty, and now this monk comes alone! Seems like this is his destiny. Why not kill this monk, too?”

He buckled his bow and arrows onto his shoulders, grabbed his sword and shield, and started running up to the Buddha. When he got close, Angulimala charged up to him for the attack.

But somehow, Angulimala couldn’t get close enough! Buddha was just walking along at a normal pace, and although Angulimala ran as fast as he could, he couldn’t run fast enough to reach the Buddha.

Angulimala thought, “I can run and catch up with a galloping elephant and grab it, or a galloping horse or deer. But even though I am going as fast as I can, I can’t catch up to this monk who is just walking at a normal pace!”

This was because of the Buddha’s supernatural powers. Finally, after running as fast as he could possibly go, panting, sweating and gasping for breath, he called out, “Stop, monk! Stop!”

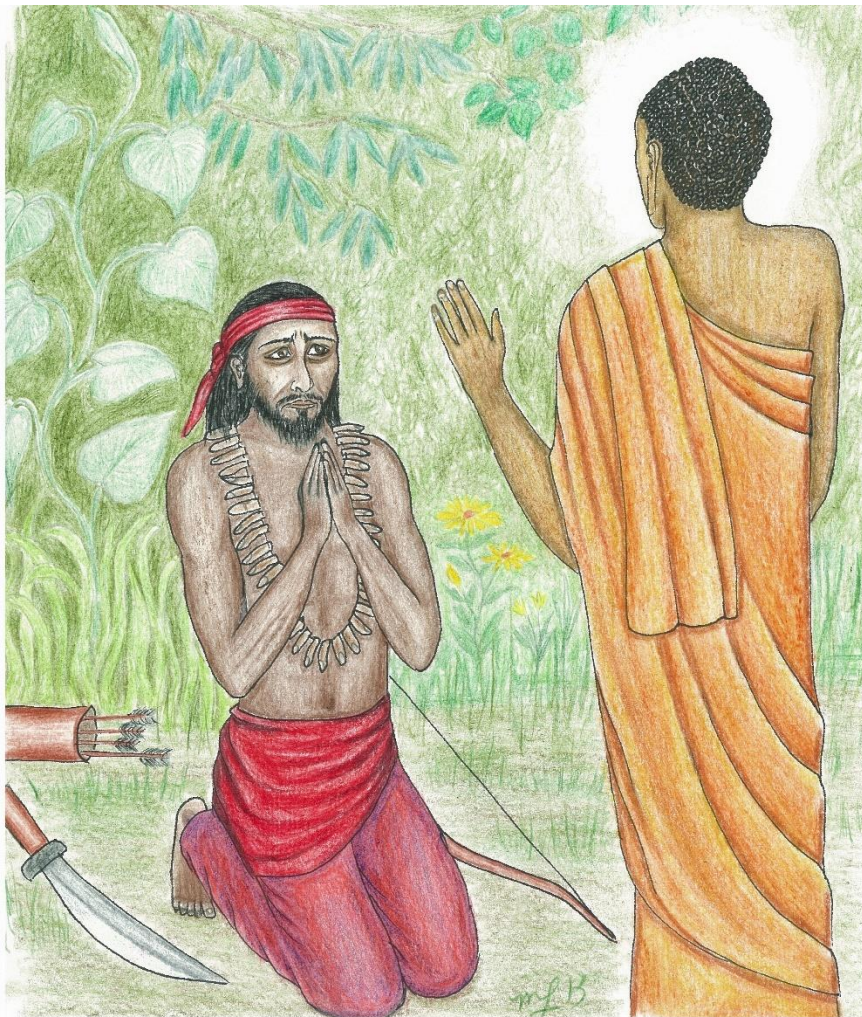
The Buddha said, “I have stopped, Angulimala. You stop also.”

Angulimala was confused. He didn't know what the Buddha meant. He thought, "These Sakya monks are supposed to speak the truth. But this monk is walking, and yet he says he has stopped. What does he mean? Is it truth or a lie? I am going to question him."

He said, "While you are walking, monk, you tell me you have stopped. But now that I have stopped, you say I have not stopped. Monk, what do you mean by that? How is it that you have stopped and I haven't?"

The Buddha replied, "I have stopped harming any living being. But you have no self-control towards anything. So that is why I have stopped and you have not."

These few words from the Buddha sunk deep into Angulimala's mind, which suddenly and completely changed him. He said, "Oh finally, a wise man I can respect; this monk has now appeared in this forest. Surely I will give up all evil, hearing your words speaking the Dharma."



Angulimala threw his weapons on the ground and bowed to the Buddha's feet in devotion. He asked the Buddha to ordain him as a monk.

The Buddha only said, "Come, monk." And that is how Angulimala became a monk.

The Buddha walked back toward Savatthi with Angulimala walking along with him as his helper, his attendant monk. When they arrived in Savatthi, they went to a park to stay. At that time, there were big crowds of people gathered at the gate of the palace of the king of Kosala, King Pasenadi.

Terribly upset, they were shouting and loudly demanding that the terrible robber and murderer Angulimala be destroyed.

King Pasenadi in his carriage and 500 of his men on horseback left the palace and went to the park where the Buddha was staying. The king got out of the carriage, walked up to the Buddha, bowed and sat near him.

The Buddha asked, “What is wrong, great king? Is the king of Magadha attacking you? Or is it the Licchavis, or some other hostile ruler?”

The king said, “It’s not that, lord. A bandit has appeared in my kingdom. He continues to murder people and he wears their fingers as a necklace. I’m never going to succeed in putting him down, my lord.”

The Buddha said, “But, great king, if you saw that Angulimala had shaved off his hair and beard, put on a monk’s robe, gotten ordained, and followed all of the monks’ rules, never killing or stealing, living the holy life, only doing good, would you still do that to him?”

Having great respect for the Buddha’s monks, the king said, “We should bow to him, invite him, or ask him to accept offerings of robes, food, lodging and medicine, or we should arrange for his protection, shelter and defense. But lord, he is a criminal who does such evil acts, so how could he have such virtue and self-control?”

Angulimala was sitting not far away. The Buddha reached out his arm, pointed to Angulimala, and said, “There is Angulimala.”

The king was so shocked that his hair stood on end. The Buddha noticed his expression of fear and said, “Don’t be afraid, great king, don’t be afraid. There is nothing to fear.”

The king’s horror and fear disappeared with the Buddha’s calm words. The king walked over to Angulimala and said to him, “Lord, Angulimala was once a noble person, wasn’t he?” The king guessed that he must have been a good person earlier in his life, to be able to live as a monk now.

“Yes, great king,” Angulimala replied.

The king asked, “What was the name of your father’s family? And your mother’s family?”

Angulimala responded, “My father’s family, great king, was called Gagga. My mother’s family was called Mantāni.”

The king, respectfully creating a new name for Angulimala as the son of Gagga and Mantāni, said, “Let the noble monk Gagga Mantāniputta allow me to take care of getting your robes, food, lodging and medicine.”

Venerable Angulimala thought that just living in the forest, begging for food, and wearing robes made from rags, as he was doing then, was good enough for him. So, he responded, "There is no need, great king."

King Pasenadi walked back to the Buddha and said, "It's is wonderful, lord, it is marvelous how the Buddha trains the untrained, quiets the unquiet, calms the uncalm. One whom we couldn't control without punishment or weapons the Buddha has controlled without punishment or weapons. And now, lord, we must depart. We are busy and have much to do." And he bowed respectfully and left.

One morning, Ven. Angulimala went with his bowl to receive food from the people of Savatthi. He went from house to house and stood at the door, waiting for an offering of a bit of food from each. Then he saw that there was a young woman having a baby who was in terrible distress and pain. Feeling deep compassion, he didn't know what he could do to help. He thought, "What horrible things people must suffer, what pain they suffer!" Afterward, he went to the Buddha and told him what he saw.

The Buddha advised him to go and bless the woman by saying, "Sister, since I was born, I have never purposely taken the life of a living being. By that truth, may you and the child have peace."

Ven. Angulimala said, "Wouldn't I be lying? I have purposely taken the lives of so many living beings."

The Buddha responded, "Then, Angulimala, say to her, "Sister, since I was born with the noble birth I have never purposely taken the life of a living being. By that truth may you and the child have peace."

The Buddha meant that since Angulimala became a monk, it was as if he was reborn as a monk; he left behind his old life and since that time he never killed any living being.

So, Ven. Angulimala went to the woman and spoke the words the Buddha had advised him to say, blessing her. And the woman and her child were healed, were free of pain and felt very peaceful.

Afterward, Ven Angulimala sat alone, meditating, completely controlling his mind, keeping it free of distraction. His meditation became very deep, he suddenly and directly knew that he would have no more births, that this was his last life, because at that moment he had accomplished the final goal of the holy spiritual life. He had reached enlightenment. He had become an Arahant.

One morning some days later, he went out to receive food from people in the town of Savatthi, and someone threw a big hard clod of dirt and rocks at him. Then another person hit his body with a large stick, and someone else threw a big sharp piece of pottery at his head. They made

his head bleed, broke his bowl, and tore his robe. They knew he was a murderer before he became a monk and they were still angry at him. When he returned to where the monks were staying, the Buddha said,

“Take this pain, holy man, take the pain. You are experiencing here and now in this life the results of the acts you did before. Otherwise, you would have experienced the results of your karma for many, many years in hell.”

Later, when Ven. Angulimala was alone, blissfully meditating, he thought,

“One who lived recklessly, but is never again reckless,
one who did bad deeds but now buries them with good deeds,
one who as a young monk has devotion to the Buddha’s Dharma,
he lights up the world like a full moon when the clouds disappear.

Let my enemies hear the Dharma, let them come to the Buddha’s teaching.
Let them serve the people who practice the Dharma because they are at peace.
Let my enemies hear the Dharma, and learn about tolerance and kindness.
Then they would not wish to harm me; they would not try to hurt other beings. Let my enemy who guards and protects all beings, attain the ultimate peace.

I was obnoxious in the past, but I am innocent now.
My name Ahimsaka is now true; I don’t hurt anyone.
Although I once lived as the robber with the name ‘finger necklace,’
And was swept along by the big flood of ignorance,
I went for refuge to the Buddha.
I have found the refuge that leads to the end of suffering.
I did so many acts that would have led to births in horrible places,
Yet the result of those acts I experience now,
So I need not suffer in the future, because I will have no future births.
Oh people are fools if they are reckless and run after desires;
But those who diligently meditate reach the highest bliss.”

Questions:

1. Why couldn’t Angulimala catch up to the Buddha and kill him? (the Buddha used his supernatural power)
2. What was it that the Buddha had stopped but that Angulimala had not stopped? (harming living beings)
3. How did Ven. Angulimala feel in his heart when he saw the woman having a baby? (compassion)

4. Why did people throw things at Ven. Angulimala? (they knew he was a murderer before)
5. Why did Ven. Angulimala have to suffer with people throwing things at him even though he was an Arahant? (it was the result of his bad karma)
6. At the end of the story, what did Ven. Angulimala wish for his enemies? (that they hear the Dharma, serve those who practice Dharma, and attain ultimate peace)

What the Buddha said:

“Yassa pāpam kataṃ kammaṃ, kusalena pithīyathi, so imaṃ lokaṃ pabhāseti, abbhā mutto va candimā.”

“He who by good deeds covers the evil he has done, illuminates this world like the moon freed from clouds.”

Dhammapada 173 (13:7)

Dharma Discussion - Confidence:

Angulimala made an extremely dramatic change, from a murderer to a monk.

Let's think about why he made that change.

At first, Angulimala thought he was extremely powerful, in that he could take people's lives and terrorize the whole area, having control over so many people.

But then he saw someone with much greater power - the Buddha.

Was Angulimala's mind powerful? No, his mind was weak.

The Buddha pointed out that Angulimala had no self-control.

He had no power over himself.

The Buddha's mind was extremely powerful. He had great wisdom and self-control, and he had no fear.

Angulimala admired that, and had confidence that the Buddha could help him.

He had confidence in the Buddha and his teachings.

But he didn't have much confidence in himself.

When he first saw the woman suffering having her baby, did he try to help her? No. Although he had compassion for her, he didn't even try to help.

He didn't have any confidence that he could do anything to help her.

He went to the Buddha, who advised him to say something that would heal her.

But he didn't feel confident when he thought about the horrible things he did before.

He only became confident when he thought of himself as a new person, a good person who now follows the Dharma.

And then without any worries, with complete confidence, he could help and heal the woman and her baby.

Not only that, what happened when he meditated? He was able to meditate very deeply. So, his confidence helped him to meditate better.

When people attacked Ven. Angulimala, throwing things at him, he seemed to lose his confidence again.

The Buddha pointed out that it was the result of his past karma,

But, Ven. Angulimala had already become an Arahant!

So we see that when a person is kind, compassionate, and pure-minded, what happens to their past negative karma? It doesn't disappear; one still must suffer the results of one's past negative karma.

So, Angulimala had to suffer pain and humiliation of people hating him and throwing things at him.

What if he had not become a kind and virtuous person, what would be the results of his negative karmas?

He would have suffered terribly for a very long time.

But after he became a virtuous person, what happened to the pain he had to endure? It was much less.

What quality or character trait did Angulimala gain when he met the Buddha, when he followed the Dharma, and when he blessed the woman?

He gained confidence.

We learn from this story that even if we have misbehaved, made bad choices, made bad mistakes - even if we have done terrible things - we can have full confidence that following the Dharma can help us be peaceful and happy.

When we make a bad mistake, sometimes guilt can overwhelm us or make us feel depressed, with thoughts of being not good enough, unworthy or a failure.

Instead, no matter what you did or failed to do, consider it as an opportunity for you to learn.

Think about how you can do better next time, how you can avoid making the mistake again.

And be determined not to do it again.

Maybe you can help or be especially kind to someone you hurt.

And you can pray for them.

Remember that you are a good person, especially because you are aware of your mistakes, and you are learning the Dharma.

And then let all the bad feelings go.

Remember Angulimala: if he can rise above his past mistakes, so can we!

Activity:

Write the quotation of Buddha on paper. On one half of the paper, draw a picture of Angulimala before he met the Buddha, and on the other half, Angulimala after he met the Buddha.

Chapter 24 – The Story of Sundari

Very often during his life, the Buddha lived and taught at Jetāvana Monastery in the town of Sāvatti, the capital of the Kosala kingdom near the Himalayan mountains. The people of Sāvatti showed their great devotion to the Buddha and his monks by providing them with plenty of good food, new robes, medicines, and ample housing at the monastery.

Also staying in Sāvatti were some wandering ascetics who were not so well cared-for. They appeared to be holy people, dressing in rags and surviving on offerings of food, but they were not making much effort to develop virtues and purify their minds. They didn't receive much food or other offerings from the people of Sāvatti. They felt that the people had forgotten about them ever since the Buddha and his monks had arrived in town. They felt very jealous and couldn't stand all the attention and respect the Buddha and his monks were getting. Among those ascetics was a wandering young lady ascetic called Sundari, who was very beautiful.

One day, one of the ascetics said to her, "Sister, will you do a favor for us, your relatives?" Although they weren't really relatives, they wanted to express their close connection to her to make her feel important.

She answered, "What would you like me to do? What can I do for you? I would do anything for my relatives, even give up my life for you."

They said, "Then sister, visit Jetāvana Monastery regularly."

She agreed. She knew what they wanted her to do. She must visit the monastery regularly at night as if she was privately visiting with the Buddha, like a secret girlfriend. That would ruin his reputation, because monks aren't allowed to have girlfriends. The people of Sāvatti would be so disgusted with the Buddha that they would stop making offerings to him and his monks. And then the people would make their offerings to the ascetics instead. It seemed like a great plan!

Sundari then walked to Jetāvana Monastery in the evening, when the people were leaving the monastery to go home. They thought it was unusual for a lady to go alone to the monastery after the program was over. After she passed them, she went back to the ascetics' campsite. Early in the morning, when the people were coming to see the Buddha, she left the campsite and was seen walking out from the monastery.

After a few days, when many people had seen her going to the monastery in the evening and leaving in the morning, the ascetics paid someone to kill her and bury her body in a ditch at the monastery. They did that so people would think that the Buddha or his monks had killed her and hidden the body to try to prevent others from finding out that he had a girlfriend. That would make the Buddha and his monks look really, really bad!

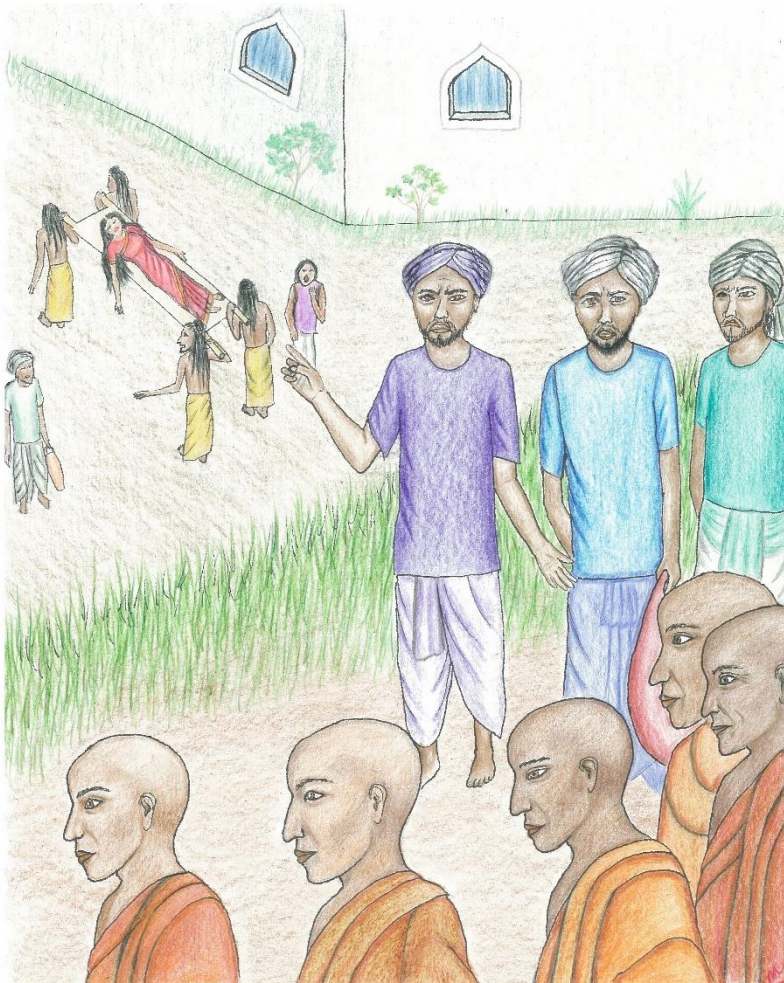
The ascetics went to King Pasenadi, the king of Kosala, and reported to him, "Great king, the wanderer nun Sundari cannot be found."

The king asked, "Where do you suspect she is?"

They replied, "In Jetāvana Monastery, great king."

"Then search Jetāvana Monastery," the king said, giving them permission to search there.

The ascetics went to the monastery and pretended to look for her, searching all around. Then they dug her body up out of the hole in the ditch where she had been buried. They put her body on a stretcher and carried her through the town of Sāvatti, walking through every street, shouting,



"Look at what the monks, the sons of the Sakyans, have done! These sons of the Sakyans are shameless, bold wicked liars who do evil! They claim to practice the Dharma with purity, to speak truth, to be virtuous and good - but they are not monks, they are not holy men! Where are the monk and holy man in them? They are far from being monks and holy men! How can they do this to her and then kill her?"

The people of Sāvatti were horrified and angry. When they saw the monks, they repeated the words of the ascetics, shouting, "These sons of the Sakyans are shameless, bold wicked liars who do evil!"

They shouted insults and rude, horrible names at them. They aggressively humiliated the

monks with the worst words possible.

The monks calmly and silently continued walking, and then reported to the Buddha what was happening. The Buddha said,

“Monks, this uproar won’t last long. It will only last seven days. At the end of seven days, it will disappear. When people insult monks like that, say this: ‘The liar goes to the hell-world, and so does a person who does evil and says ‘I didn’t do it.’ Both of them have this result in the next life, as men whose acts are evil.”

When the monks went out in the town again, the people insulted them again. The monks calmly told them what the Buddha taught them to say:

‘The liar goes to the hell-world, and so does a person who does evil and says ‘I didn’t do it.’ Both of them have this result in the next life, as men whose acts are evil.”

When the people heard that, they reasoned that since the monks believed that when they died, they immediately would go to a hell-world if they lied or falsely claimed they didn’t do anything wrong, then they wouldn’t do that - they wouldn’t lie or deny that they did wrong. They wouldn’t do anything that would result in going to a hell-world after striving so hard in the disciplined life of a Buddhist monk seeking enlightenment. So, they concluded that the Buddha and his monks must not have killed Sundari.

They said to one another, “These monks, these sons of the Sakyans, did not do it. It was not done by them. They swear to that.”

The people talked among each other over the next few days, and sure enough, after seven days, the accusations, insults and shouting stopped.

Several monks went to the Buddha and said, “It’s wonderful, Lord. It’s marvelous how well that was predicted by the Blessed One!”

The Buddha then advised them, “People who are careless provoke others with words that are like darts thrown at an elephant in battle. But when harsh words are spoken to a monk, let him just endure them with an undisturbed mind.”

Later, the king investigated what happened, and the ascetics confessed their crime of hiring someone to murder Sundari. The Buddha and his monks were then honored even more than before, and from that time on, were well taken care of by the people of Sāvatti.

Questions:

1. Why were the ascetics envious of the Buddha and his monks? (the Buddha and his monks were getting plenty of good food, robes, medicines, and housing, and the ascetics were not getting much from the people of Sāvatti)
2. Why did the ascetics ask Sundari to regularly visit Jetāvana Monastery? (so the people would think that she was secretly visiting the Buddha at night)

3. Why did they have her killed? (so it would appear as if the Buddha or his monks killed her and hid the body to prevent others from finding out he had a girlfriend)
4. What did the monks do while the people were shouting terrible things about them? (they calmly and silently continued walking)
5. What did the monks say would happen to them if they lied or denied that they did an evil act? (they would go to a hell-world in their next life)
6. How long did the Buddha say the people would continue blaming and insulting the monks? (seven days)

What the Buddha said:

“Netaṃ ajjatanāṃiva, nindanti tuṅhimāsināṃ, nindanti bahubhāṇināṃ, mitabhāṇinampi nindanti, natthi loke anindito.”

“Indeed, this is an ancient practice, not one only of today: they blame those who remain silent, they blame those who speak much, they blame those who speak in moderation. There is none in this world who is not blamed.”

Dhammapada 227 (17:7)

Dharma Discussion – Blame:

In a previous chapter, we discussed admitting mistakes, being honest and apologizing when someone is upset about a mistake you made, even if it was unintentional or not your fault. But what do you do when someone blames you for something you didn't do?

The wandering ascetics, and then the townspeople, blamed the Buddha and his monks for killing Sundari. The whole town was against them, believing they were murderers.

Imagine how the monks felt! They probably felt terrible that their dear master was being accused of such a horrible crime. It would be so embarrassing to be shouted at, insulted and called terrible names. And these people used to be their friends and kind, generous supporters!

Did the monks react as they were being shouted at? No, they kept walking, saying nothing. They were probably shocked, and they couldn't say anything in their defense, because they didn't know what happened, who killed Sundari. They had no way to prove they didn't do it. So they went to the Buddha for advice.

Did he advise them to just keep quiet and say nothing? No. If they say nothing, what might the people think? They might think the monks are guilty of the crime.

Did he advise them to fight back and shout at the people? No. What do you think would happen if they did? Probably more fighting and shouting.

What did he advise them to do? Defend themselves - say something in their defense to show that they didn't do what they were being accused of.

Have you ever been accused of doing something really bad that you didn't do? How did you feel? Maybe you felt humiliated, embarrassed, stressed, frustrated, or angry. We might worry that if we are being blamed, then others dislike us or think we're a bad or foolish person. So, we might lose our confidence.

Of course, if you are wrongly blamed, you can say you didn't do it, and explain why it wasn't you. If you know who did it, you might have to tell on them.

But sometimes we can't prove that we didn't do what we are accused of. So, what can we do to calm the bad feelings – the hurt, embarrassment, stress, anger – of being wrongly blamed? Remember that you're not alone; at some points in our lives we all experience being blamed for something bad that we didn't do. The Buddha has said that no matter what we do, no matter how good we are, whether we are talkative or quiet, we all get blamed for doing bad things at times. He said there is no one in the world who has not been blamed. Even the Buddha was blamed for the worst crimes, as we see in this story. So, being blamed doesn't mean there is something wrong with you.

It could be an honest mistake – maybe the person mistakenly thought you did it. But sometimes it isn't so honest; there's something wrong with the person who is blaming you. That person may be trying to turn others against you. In the story, the ascetics were trying to manipulate the townspeople, trying to turn them against the Buddha so the ascetics would get all the attention instead. Or, the person may be jealous of you, like the ascetics were jealous of the Buddha. Or maybe the person does the kinds of bad things he is accusing you of doing. By blaming you, he thinks that no one will notice he does such things. Maybe the person is trying to upset you so that he can feel power over you. There are many reasons why others may wrongly blame you.

To calm yourself and avoid losing your confidence, remember the Buddha and his monks being wrongly blamed by the ascetics. Remember that you are a good person; don't let others' negativity confuse you. A person who blames you for no reason is creating negative karma. Try to feel compassion for that person, because he is confused by his negative emotions, creating suffering for himself, and try to have good wishes that he overcomes those emotions and his suffering.

Activity:

Write the quote of the Buddha (What the Buddha said, above) neatly on paper and decorate it. Keep it as a reminder not to lose your confidence when you are wrongly blamed.

Chapter 25 – Sona Tries to Meditate

In a village in the land of Magadha in the northeast part of ancient India lived the Kolivisa clan. A millionaire in the Kolivisa clan had a son named Sona. From the time he was born, little Sona received lavish gifts and had a luxurious lifestyle. He lived with his family in a big mansion and had many servants to take care of him.

Sona had very soft and delicate skin even as a teenager. And there was something extremely unusual about his feet. Not only were they completely soft, like silk, but he had very soft hair growing on the bottom of his feet! No one had ever seen anyone with hair on the bottom of their feet before; people were shocked and amazed when they saw it. His family wanted him to remain special and unique, so in order to protect his feet from getting rough and losing the hair on them, his parents didn't allow him to walk on the ground. He never had to do any kind of work, except learning to run his father's business so that he could take over when it was time for his father to retire. He had a lot of free time to do as he wished, and he enjoyed playing his lute, a stringed instrument with a shape similar to a guitar.

King Bimbisara, who ruled over the 80,000 villages in the land of Magadha, planned a big meeting to discuss some matters in the kingdom. He invited a representative of each village to the meeting. He had heard about Sona and his unusual feet, and he was curious. So, he also invited Sona by messenger sent from the palace, with a message, "Let Sona come. I want Sona to come."

When Sona's parents heard this from the king's messenger, they were delighted that the king was so interested in their son. To be sure that Sona would make a good impression, they told him,

"The king wants to see your feet, Sona dear. Now don't stretch your feet out towards the king. That would be disrespectful. Instead, sit down in front of him cross-legged in lotus position, with the bottom of your feet turned up so that he will be able to see your feet as you sit there."

His parents arranged for him to travel on a palanquin, which is a covered seat like a small tent on two long poles carried on the shoulders of four servants. Sona was carried in comfort on the palanquin all the way to the king's palace.

When they arrived, Sona went to the king and politely and dutifully bowed. Then he sat in front of the king in full lotus position as his parents told him to do, with each foot resting on the opposite thigh. The king saw the soft hair growing on the soles of Sona's feet, and was amazed.

Then the king spoke to the big crowd of people who were assembled there, including Sona. He instructed them about what goals they should accomplish in their lives.

Then he told them, "You have been instructed by me in the goals of this life. No go and do honor to the Buddha. He will instruct you in the goals to be accomplished for your future lives."

The huge crowd of people did as they were advised by the king, and traveled to see the Buddha. When they arrived, the Buddha instructed them in the Dharma. They were very pleased by his teachings, and accepted him as their teacher, saying aloud that they take refuge in the Three Refuges – the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Then they departed for the long journey back home to their villages.

But Sona didn't want to leave. He was fascinated with the Dharma and wanted to learn more. He didn't want to return to all the comforts and luxuries of his life at home in the mansion, because it seemed so meaningless. What was he going to accomplish in his life? What was the point of waking up every day just to eat, talk, learn to run his father's business, play his lute, eat again, and sleep? He wanted to be like the monks, learning and practicing Dharma and meditation every day. He decided this was the way he wanted to spend his life.

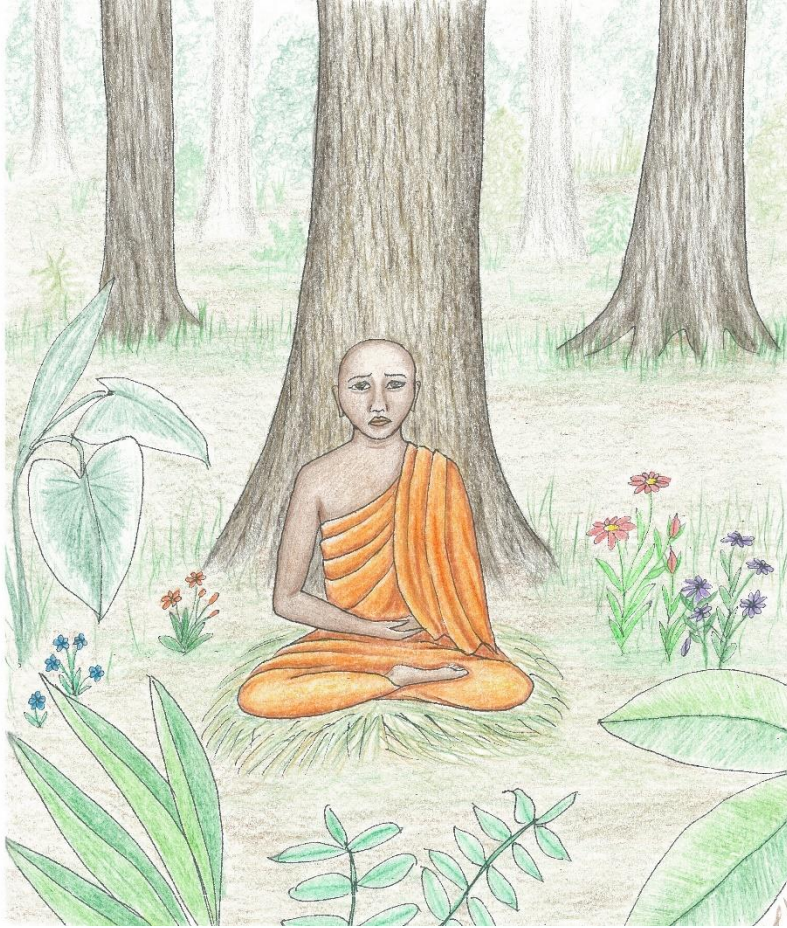
So, he went to the Buddha and asked to be ordained as a monk. The Buddha said he could if his parents agree. A message was sent through a messenger to his parents for their permission, and they agreed. He was then ordained as a monk, and he shaved his head and wore robes like the other monks. He took a seat among the monks to hear the Buddha speak about the Dharma, and to listen to the other monks discussing the Dharma.

Sona was eager to experience the peace, contentment and wisdom that the Buddha and other monks had. He had experienced every kind of pleasure and wealth that he could ask for, but he had not experienced real peace and contentment. Now that he was a monk, he wanted to learn and practice meditation. He received meditation instructions, and understood that the best way to practice is to do a meditation retreat, which means meditating many hours per day over a few days, weeks or months while remaining silent, alone and undisturbed.

So, very soon after becoming a monk, he went to a quiet place in the forest called the Cool Grove to do his meditation retreat. He made a small hut with some branches and palm leaves to sleep in at night and to stay in during rainy weather. This was totally different than the secure and comfortable, but noisy and busy atmosphere at the mansion! Now he was alone in the beautiful forest and he was ready to start, determined to make great efforts to really learn to meditate.

Every day, for hours at a time, he sat cross-legged with his eyes closed and tried to calm and concentrate his mind. After some time sitting, he needed to stretch his legs, so he followed the Buddha's instructions for "walking meditation" - very slowly and mindfully walking back and forth on a small area of smooth ground - his walking path.

While he was walking, he tried constantly to be mindful of each and every movement and feeling in his body. He didn't care at all about the hair on his feet. That didn't matter anymore. While he was sitting, he tried to focus his mind only on breathing, or on other subjects that he had been instructed to concentrate on.



But it wasn't so easy! His mind just kept wandering off to some other thoughts, and soon began thinking about all sorts of things. At first, he patiently brought his mind back to his meditation. But, again and again his mind just wandered off, and soon was just as distracted and uncontrolled as it had been back at home with his family. It was getting frustrating!

His tender, soft feet were not used to walking on the ground. During walking meditation, he noticed that his feet were hurting and swelling, and developing terrible blisters. But he was determined to ignore the pain and persevere in his efforts to master walking meditation. Soon the blisters

burst and then began to bleed. He kept doing his walking meditation anyway, trying to be tough and disciplined like the other monks. The walking path became spotted with blood from his feet.

Day after day he tried to meditate, but he could not calm his mind enough to experience real peace. He just kept thinking and thinking, not meditating. He became really frustrated and thought,

"This is no use. I have enough energy and determination to be able to concentrate well like the other monks. But after all this effort, I didn't get the peace I was hoping for. I am still wishing for this and that. I should just return home to live my family. With that wealth, I can make offerings of food, housing and other things to the monks to make merit. That will give me at least some happiness."

On that same day, the Buddha came to visit Sona. When the Buddha arrived at Sona's meditation hut, Sona prepared a seat for him, and bowed to greet him. The Buddha said,

"When you were alone in retreat, Sona, weren't you just now thinking, 'Whatever students the Blessed One has that are energetic, I am one of them. Yet my heart is not free of clinging to things. Now there are still riches in my family; I could use those riches and make merit. Maybe I should return to family life and use those riches to make merit?'"

Sona replied, "Yes, Lord."

The Buddha asked, "You were once a good lute player, weren't you?"

Sona said, "Yes, Lord."

The Buddha then asked, "When the strings of your lute were too tight, did your lute sound good and respond well to your fingers?"

Sona replied, "No, Lord."

The Buddha asked further, "When the strings of your lute were too loose, did your lute sound good and respond well to your fingers?"

Sona replied, "No, Lord."

"When the strings of your lute were neither too tight nor too loose and were evenly tuned, did your lute sound good and respond well then?"

"Yes, Lord," Sona agreed.

The Buddha said, "So too, Sona, trying too hard leads to agitation. Not trying hard enough leads to laziness. Therefore, try to meditate with the right amount of energy, not too intense and not too lazy. Be calm and relaxed, but fully alert. Try again."

Sona agreed to try, and the next day, he sat to meditate. This time, he didn't force his mind to focus. He didn't become agitated when his mind wandered. Instead, he just watched his thoughts, letting them come and go. When his thoughts started going too fast, he paid attention to his breathing. He was fully aware moment by moment, noticing every little thing that he felt, as he breathed in and as he breathed out. When his mind wandered, he gently and patiently brought it back to breathing. His mind became more and more calm. He felt no worry, anxiety, disappointment, discomfort, expectation, or desire.

Now, finally, he could meditate!

Questions:

1. Whom did the king tell the crowd of people to visit? (the Buddha)
2. What did Sona think of his life in his mansion after visiting the Buddha? (it was meaningless, he felt he wasn't going to accomplish anything)
3. What happened to his feet when he practiced walking meditation? (they hurt, became blistered, and bled)

4. What was Sona doing wrong in his efforts to meditate? (he was trying too hard)
5. What leads to agitation when you are trying to meditate? (trying too hard)
6. What leads to laziness when you are trying to meditate? (not trying hard enough)

What the Buddha said:

“Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti sadā Gotamasāvakaṃ,
yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca, bhāvanāya rato mano.”

“Those students of Gotama always awaken happily,
whose minds delight in the practice of meditation by day and night.”

Dhammapada 301 (21:12)

Dharma Discussion - Meditation:

What is meditation?

Generally, it means focusing your mind on one simple thing, such as breathing, or on lovingkindness.

It can also mean mindfulness, such as being aware in each moment, of every little thing that you hear and feel. You can be mindful as you sit, as you stand, or as you walk very slowly, like Sona practiced walking meditation.

The Buddha taught and encouraged the practice of meditation.

Is it important only for monks? No, it can help anyone. It can help you! How?

It helps us to be calm and peaceful.

It trains us to concentrate, which helps us be more successful in whatever we do.

It helps us avoid stress, anger and anxiety, so we can think more calmly and clearly, and have more patience.

Have you meditated before? What is your favorite way to meditate?

Do you know how to sit in a position that is good for meditation?

It is best to sit on the floor on a cushion or folded blanket.

Sit up tall, with your back straight.

We can sit cross legged, in a half lotus (with one foot resting on the opposite thigh) or in full lotus position (each foot resting on the top of the opposite thigh).

We can rest our hands on our knees, or rest one hand in the palm of the other.

We can close our eyes, or keep them partially closed.

Our head should be facing straight ahead with our chin held in slightly.

We should keep our body as still as possible, so our mind can be still as possible.

Here are a few examples of meditation you can try. Find which one you like best.

To meditate on breathing, take long, deep, slow breaths, paying close attention to exactly how it feels, each moment, to breathe in, and breathe out. You can focus on how it feels in the nose, or in the chest, or how the abdomen moves with each breath.

To practice lovingkindness meditation, wish that you be peaceful, happy, and free from all harm and suffering, and imagine being surrounded by a bright warm light of love and protection. Then wish your friends and family be peaceful, happy, and free from all harm and suffering; imagine them surrounded by a bright warm light of love and protection..... Then wish the same for other people you know,...all people in your neighborhood,...your city,... your country,... all people in the world,...all animals and other beings on earth,...and all beings in the universe,...that they be peaceful, happy, and free from all harm and suffering; imagine them surrounded by a bright warm light of love and protection.

Or you can meditate on an object: place the object – for example, a statue or picture of Buddha, a flower, a pebble - in front of you. Look at it very carefully. Notice its shape, colors, each side (top, bottom, left, right, middle), then the whole object. Next, close your eyes and try to see it in your mind.

To meditate on an imaginary place: choose a place that you would like to be, for example on top of mountain, by a lake, in a forest, at the beach, at the bottom of the ocean, or on the moon. Close your eyes. Imagine you are sitting alone there. Imagine feeling the ground under you. What sounds might you hear? What might you feel against your skin? What might you see? Try to imagine the many things you see, feel, and hear at your imaginary place.

Do any of these meditation techniques help you feel relaxed but fully alert, like the Buddha advised Sona? Or is your mind busy, full of thoughts, like Sona? Or do you feel tired or sleepy?

Meditation is like a sport or skill that takes a lot of practice to learn to do well. Like we train our body regularly to build up our strength to play a sport, we can train our mind regularly, to build up strength in our mind to meditate. First, we have to remember to practice. The best way to remember is to fit it into your daily routine – meditate before or after you brush your teeth in the morning, or just before you go to bed. You only need a few moments - maybe just a minute or two – to meditate.

If you feel, like Sona, that it's difficult to calm your mind, don't be discouraged. After some time, you get used to the fresh, relaxed feeling after you meditate, and then you will like to do it every day, like you brush your teeth every day knowing you get a fresh clean feeling in your mouth afterward.

When you're older, you will be very glad that you started a good habit of meditation when you were young, that helped you be successful and happy.

Activity - Walking meditation:

For the first experiences of walking meditation, walk very slowly outside on different surfaces, noticing how it feels under the feet to walk on grass, gravel, pavement, soil, mulch, etc.

Or, first try standing meditation: Stand with eyes closed.

Pay close attention to breathing, noticing every sensation of breathing.

Notice the feeling of the feet on the floor - the toes, the ball of the foot, and the heels, and how the floor surface feels beneath feet.

Notice how the body is balanced on the feet, and how it feels to lean forward just a tiny bit, and then to stand straight up again.

Next, try walking meditation:

Open your eyes, and walk very slowly, naturally, without exaggerating any movements or dragging the feet.

Pay close attention, each moment, to each movement of the legs, feet and arms.

Slowly raise one foot slightly, and notice how it feels in the leg to raise the foot, then smoothly move the foot forward in a normal small step and place the foot down on the floor. Be aware of how it feels for the foot to touch the floor again.

Do the same for the next step.

Continue walking at your own pace, not looking around; just keep focused on how it feels to walk very slowly.

Feel sensations in the foot, as each part of the foot touches the floor, moves forward and touches the floor again.

Feel sensations in the leg - the upper leg, lower leg, ankle, how the body balances with each new step

Notice the movement of arms and hands.

Notice when you are breathing in, and when you are breathing out.

Chapter 26 – Visakha and Migara

Visakha was the daughter of a very wealthy man. When she was a very young girl, seven years old, her grandfather heard that the Buddha was arriving in their city and encouraged Visakha to bring all of her friends and servants and join him in welcoming the Buddha. When they went to welcome him, they took a seat among the crowd of people and heard him teach the Dharma. Little Visakha was not an ordinary girl; at her young age, she understood what he was teaching and experienced the bliss and wisdom of the first level of enlightenment, which means that she was on the path to full enlightenment and would reach it in her lifetime or in no more than seven lifetimes as a human or in a heaven-world. Her grandfather felt so happy and fortunate that the Buddha and his monks were in their hometown that he invited them to eat a meal at his house every day for the next two weeks.

When Visakha was sixteen years old, she was married to the son of a very wealthy man named Migara. Visakha moved in to the home of her husband and his family. She was very kind, had excellent manners and respected her husband's parents, always offering them food first, before others were served.

She also was very devoted to the Buddha. Migara didn't like that at all. He and his family were not at all interested in the Buddha and preferred other religious teachers instead. Visakha's devotion to the Buddha annoyed him so much that he thought of breaking up the marriage between Visakha and his son.

One morning, he was sitting at the table eating his rice-porridge, and Visakha was fanning him with a bamboo fan to keep him cool on that hot morning. A Buddhist monk came to the entrance of the house, holding his bowl to receive food. Visakha moved out of the way so Migara could see the monk and offer him some porridge.

Migara, however, didn't have any respect for Buddhist monks and didn't want to offer him anything. He wanted the monk to leave, so he pretended not to notice him. Migara kept his head down and continued to eat slowly, as if he was totally focused on enjoying his porridge.

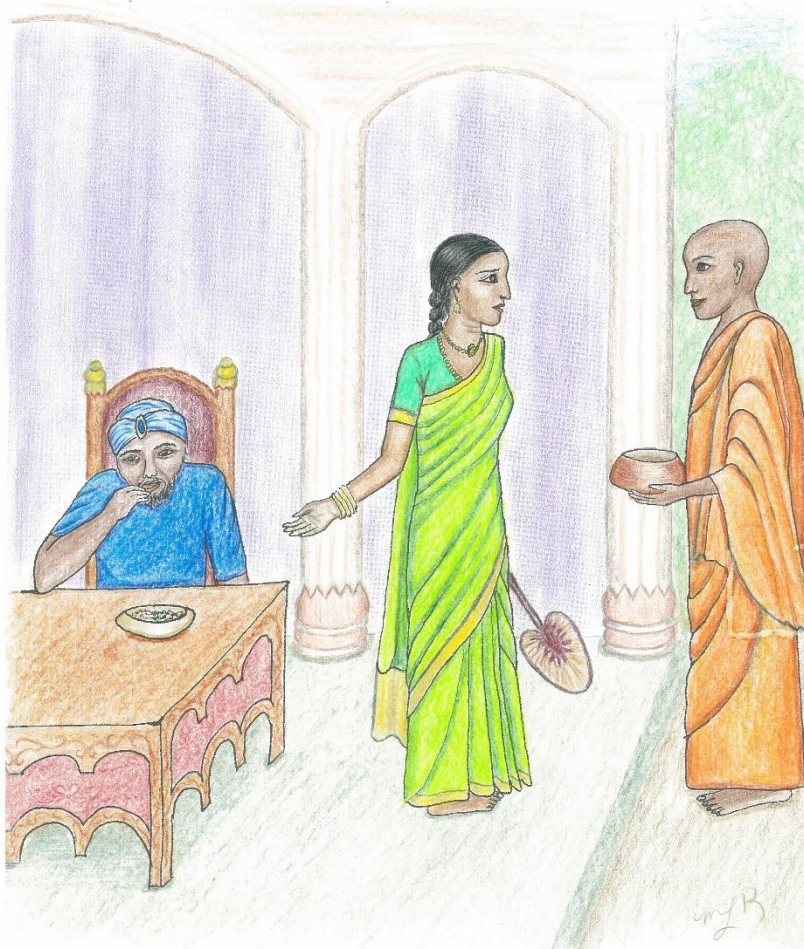
Visakha felt shocked and disgusted with his behavior. She thought, "How could he just ignore a monk who needs food? We have plenty of food we can offer." She knew that if she asked Migara for permission to serve food to the monk, he would be upset and definitely not allow it.

She felt torn between disrespecting the monk by not offering food and disrespecting her father-in-law by offering food to the monk anyway. Having great devotion to the Buddha, she felt a strong urge to serve food to the monk no matter what. To ignore the monk or turn him away would be rude and disrespectful to a student of the Buddha! That would be terrible!

But taking food from Migara's house and serving it to the monk without Migara's permission would be like stealing from Migara, her father-in-law. Not only would it be wrong to offer

stolen food, but surely Migara would be angry and try to destroy her marriage to his son. That also would be terrible!

What a dilemma! Both choices were unthinkable. She had to do something else. What should she do?



She said to the monk,
“Venerable Sir, you may go
away. My father-in-law is
eating stale food.”

Migara looked at her in anger
and disbelief, thinking, “She
has disgraced the family!”

Migara ordered the servants:
“Take away the food. Chase
that girl out of the house!
She says I am eating
garbage!”

But all of the servants
respected and admired
Visakha very much, so they
did not dare move or do
anything against her.

Visakha politely said, “Dear
father, there is no good
reason why I should go away.
Eight people from my clan

were sent with me to stay here at your house to report any misbehavior of mine. Please call them and have them investigate whether I am guilty of misbehavior.”

Migara called the people from Visakha’s clan, and described what happened.

He said to them, “While I was eating my porridge, this girl said that what I was eating was unclean. She has misbehaved and she should be asked to leave.”

Then Visakha explained to them, “Sirs, when my father-in-law ignored the monk at the door and kept eating, he was not making merit in this life. He was enjoying only the merit of past lives, which is what made him wealthy in this life. Enjoying result of merits from past lives without making fresh new merits is like eating old stale food. So, I told the monk to go away, and that my father-in-law was eating stale food.”

Visakha was explaining that Migara was wealthy because he made a lot of merit. That means he must have been generous, helped others, and done other virtuous acts, or good karmas, that gave him the good result of being wealthy in this life. But, she observed, he wasn't making much merit in this life. Therefore, he was enjoying only the results of old merits from way back in time, and therefore they were old and stale, not fresh and new.

The eight men from her clan agreed that she was innocent and had not lied or insulted him. Migara then agreed that she was not guilty of wrongdoing.

Migara still was annoyed with her, and tried to find fault with her for other incidences. No one else, however, would find that she had misbehaved. Because she wanted to respect his wishes, and he wished her to leave, she planned to leave his house anyway. But after some time, Migara's attitude toward her changed, and he asked her to forgive him.

She said, "Father, I forgive you, but I will only stay if I can serve the monks as I like, since my family and I have complete faith in the Buddha."

Migara agreed, and after some time, he invited the Buddha to his home. From that time on, he became a great follower of the Buddha also. He regretted his earlier rejection of the Buddha and his monks. Now he could see the good character of Visakha. He was deeply grateful to her for having led him to the path to enlightenment through the Buddha Dharma. Not only Migara, but everyone in the household - his whole family and all their employees and servants- also became devoted to the Buddha.

Visakha soon became famous for her great generosity to the Buddha and Sangha. She thought about what they might need, saw what was needed, and bought it for them. She spent a large amount of money to buy land and build a monastery with 500 rooms for the Buddha and his monks. That became one of the two monasteries that the Buddha stayed in most frequently.

She also made donations of robes and medicine for monks and for Buddhist female monastics, or nuns. She made sure they were well cared for, donating food for monks living at or visiting the monastery, sick monks, and the monks taking care of sick monks. She helped the nuns in many ways, also. When she thought about them making use of her gifts, she felt enormously happy and peaceful. The merit she had made, as well as the joy she felt from making the donations, enabled her to calm and concentrate her mind very well in meditation.

Questions:

1. How did Migara feel about Visakha's devotion to the Buddha? (it annoyed him, he didn't like it at all)
2. What did Migara do when the monk arrived? (he ignored the monk, pretended he didn't see the monk, kept his head down as if focused on enjoying his food)

3. Why didn't Visakha serve food to the monk? (if she asked permission, Migara would not allow it, and if she served food anyway, it would be like stealing from Migara and he would be angry and ruin her marriage)
4. What did Visakha mean when she said Migara is eating stale food? (he is enjoying the results of his past merit and not making any new merit)
5. What kind of person was Visakha? (generous, respectful, kind, devoted to the Buddha)
6. After her generosity to the Sangha, and after feeling the joy of making the donations, what was Visakha better able to do? (meditate; concentrate her mind in meditation)

What the Buddha said:

“Puññaṃ ce puriso kayirā, kayirāth’ etaṃ punappunaṃ, tamhi chandaṃ kayirātha, sukho puññaṃ uccayo.

Pāpo’ pi passati bhaddam, yāva pāpaṃ na paccati,
yadā ca paccati pāpaṃ, atha pāpo pāpāni passati.”

“If one does good deeds, then do it again and again; take delight in merit, for accumulation of merit leads to happiness.

As long as the evil act does not ripen, the evil-doer feels fine, but when the evil act ripens then he feels the painful result of his evil deed.”

Dhammapada 118 (9:3), 119 (9:4)

Dharma discussion - Merit:

What is “merit”?

Merit means good karma, the cause of good results, the cause of being fortunate.

Merit includes good deeds. What are some examples of good deeds in the story?

Offering food, making donations, generosity, honoring parents.

Merit also includes Buddhist practices.

What Buddhist practices do you do? Prayers, chanting, meditation, mindfulness, and learning Dharma, like what we are doing right now!

Merit also includes being virtuous, acting with good character.

What are some examples of virtuous behavior? Kindness, compassion, patience, tolerance, honesty, forgiving others, admitting our mistakes, being considerate.

Actually, merit includes anything we say or do with love, with a good heart.

Merit is the cause of being fortunate. What are some examples of being fortunate, or being lucky?

Having wealth, good health, intelligence, loving family, nice friends, good home, good neighborhood, good teachers, happy experiences, success.

These happen as a result of making merit, acting or speaking with love, with a good heart.

Are we enjoying the merits of past lives? Yes!

Does that mean we always will have good fortune? No.

As the Buddha says, everything is impermanent, everything changes.

And everyone, even the Buddha, has made mistakes, bad karmas, in past lives, so we all experience some suffering sometimes— illness, injuries, loss, difficulties.

Even very virtuous, kind people suffer badly sometimes because they are experiencing the results of old negative karmas.

But we shouldn't worry about that. It's best to focus on the present, not the past.

You are now creating many new merits, so you are making a good future for yourself, and the difficult times won't seem so bad.

When we make new merits, we develop good habits, and then it's easier to keep doing them in the future.

What happens when people don't believe in merits and karma?

Migara was acting as if he didn't believe in karma. He didn't know that he was just enjoying the results of his good deeds done in past lives, so he thought he didn't have to do much to create a good life for himself.

He didn't seem concerned about being rude to the monk and negative karma.

Similarly, people who behave selfishly and do bad deeds – for example, being unkind, harming others, taking things from others without returning them, lying, bullying – often don't suffer punishment or consequences, so they think they can get away with it. Everything seems to be going just fine for them.

They think that nothing bad will happen.

But eventually, in one life or another, they'll experience results of their behavior.

They are like a crab in a pot of water. He is happy and dancing around in the cool water in the pot, thinking that everything is great.

But when the fire is turned on under the pot, the crab suffers and gets cooked.

Or they are like a person who has saved up money in the bank, but who spends it all and doesn't earn any more money to deposit in the bank, and ends up being very poor.

Making merit is like earning money and saving it in a bank; we have a wealth of good karma.

The more merit we make, the more we are creating a good future.

But unlike money, merits stay with us, even after we die, from one life to another.

We can also share our merits, or offer them to others.

We can share merits with someone who is suffering, in need of help.

We can offer merits to loved ones who have passed away, so they have a good rebirth into a happy new life.

We also offer merits to all beings, to help all beings wherever they are.

If we give our merits to others, then do we lose them?

It seems logical that if we give everything away, we have nothing left for ourselves.

But actually, sharing merits, being generous and compassionate, gives us even more merit!

Activities:

1. Draw the Crab in the Pot:

Write on paper the Buddha's words:

"As long as the evil act does not ripen, the evil-doer feels fine, but when the evil act ripens then he feels the painful result of his evil deed."

Then, draw a picture of a crab in a pot of water with a fire lit under it. Watercolor paint, markers, pastels or crayons may be used to color the picture.

The picture of the crab in the pot reminds us that when a crab is in a pot of cool water, he feels like everything is just fine, but once the stove is turned on – once he feels the results of bad karma - he is shocked to feel the pain of the hot water.

2. Make a list of today's merits:

Make a list of each thing you did today with kindness and love, caring about others. Include any instances where you almost did something uncaring, unkind, or dishonest but you decided to be kind or honest instead. Include any prayers, chanting, or meditation that you did. Also include anything you did while being mindful.

Chapter 27 – The Sick Monk

There was once a monk who had an illness called dysentery, which causes terrible diarrhea. The illness is caught from touching contaminated surfaces like door handles and tables, especially when hands are not thoroughly washed, or from contaminated food or water.

The monk was extremely weak and dehydrated and was always thirsty because of the illness. The water he drank just passed through his body. He was suffering terribly and becoming more and more weak.

The diarrhea became severe and uncontrollable, and the bathroom was not very close to his room. He was so weak that he could barely walk. Sometimes he couldn't make it to the bathroom, so he had accidents. He became much too weak to clean his clothes or bathe. So, he lay on the floor of his room on a mat in his soiled robe.

The Buddha, along with Venerable Ananda, visited the monastery where the sick monk was living. Venerable Ananda was the Buddha's attendant who stayed close to the Buddha's side to attend to whatever was needed by the Buddha. They often traveled together visiting different monasteries to check on how the monks were doing and to give advice, guidance and teachings.

When they arrived, the Buddha walked through the monastery with Venerable Ananda. They saw the sick monk laying on his mat. Immediately they felt great compassion for him, suffering alone with no one to help him.

The Buddha asked him, "What is your sickness, monk?"

The monk answered, "It is dysentery, Blessed One."

The Buddha asked, "But, monk, have you no one to help you?"

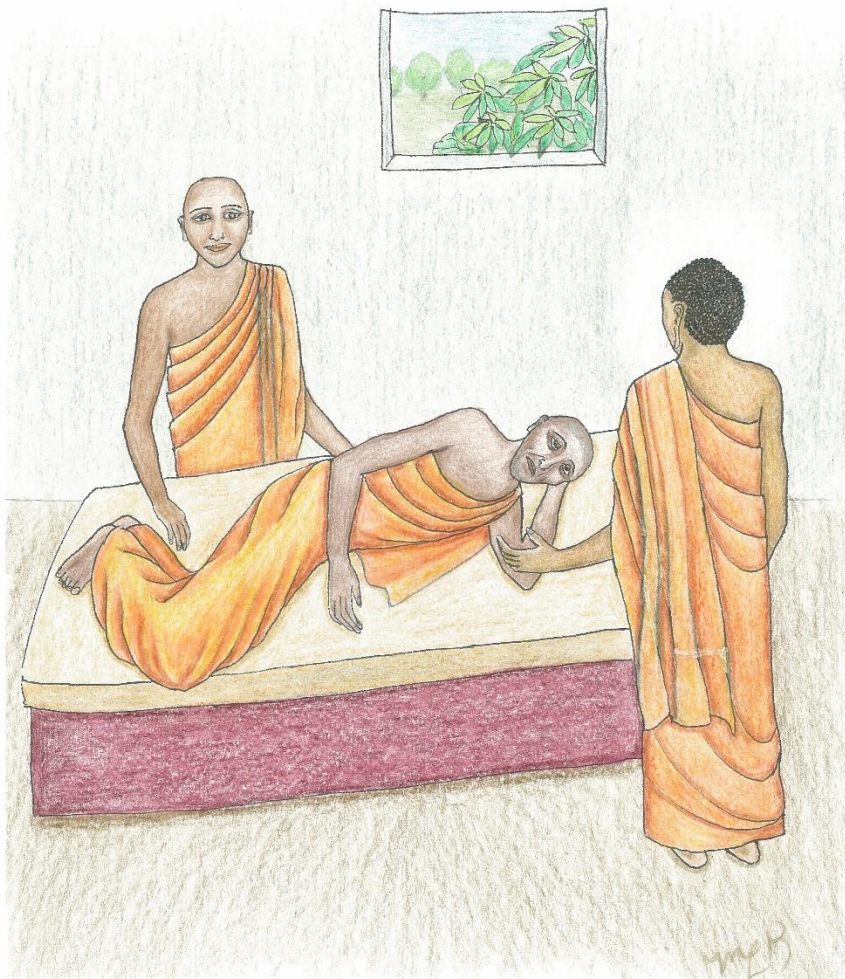
The monk answered, "No, Blessed One."

The Buddha looked surprised and asked, "Why don't the other monks take care of you, monk?"

The monk looked uncomfortable, and said, "I am of no use to the monks, Lord, that's why they don't take care of me."

The Buddha turned to Venerable Ananda, and said, "Ananda, go and get a bucket of water. Let's wash this monk."

Venerable Ananda replied, "Yes, Lord" and immediately brought the water.



The Buddha arranged the sick monk's body so he could be washed, removed the soiled robe, and then poured water from the bucket onto the sick monk as Venerable Ananda washed him thoroughly.

Then the Buddha held the upper part of the sick monk's body and Venerable Ananda held the lower part of the monk's body and together they lifted him and put him on a bed. They put a fresh robe on him.

Later, the Buddha called all of the monks at the monastery to a meeting. When they all had assembled in the meditation hall, he asked them,

"Monks, is there a sick monk in a room here?"

They answered, "There is, Blessed One."

"What is that monk's illness?" he asked.

They replied, "He has dysentery, Lord."

The Buddha asked, "Does he have anyone to take care of him?"

They said, "No, Blessed One."

He asked, "Why do the monks not take care of him?"

They admitted, "Lord, that monk is of no use to the monks, so that is why they don't take care of him."

The Buddha pointed out, “Monks, you don’t have your father or mother to take care of you. If you don’t take care of each other, who will take care of you?”

The monks didn’t know what to say.

The Buddha instructed them, “If you would take care of me, then take care of anyone else who is sick.”

He gave more specific instructions to the monks: “If a sick monk has a teacher, then the teacher should take care of him until he recovers. Or his roommate, or his student, or his classmate should take care of him until he recovers. If he has none of those, then the community of monks should take care of him. Failing to take care of a sick monk is wrong.”

Questions:

1. What was Venerable Ananda’s job and responsibilities in working for the Buddha? (he was the Buddha’s attendant, and he stayed close to the Buddha and traveled with him to attend to whatever need the Buddha had)
2. What was wrong with the monk laying on the mat? (he was very ill and weak with diarrhea)
3. Why didn’t the other monks at the monastery take care of him? (he was of no use to them)
4. How did the Buddha and Venerable Ananda take care of the sick monk? (they washed him, changed his robe and lifted him onto a bed)
5. How do you think the monks at the monastery felt when the Buddha asked them why they didn’t take care of the sick monk? (embarrassed, ashamed)
6. What did the Buddha teach the monks? (as they would take care of the Buddha, they should take care of anyone else who is sick; it is wrong not to take care of someone who is sick)

What the Buddha said:

“Hitva ratim ca aratim ca, sītibhutaṃ nirūpadhiṃ,
sabbalōkābhibhuṃ vīraṃ, tamaḥaṃ brūmi brāhmaṇaṃ.”

“He who has given up likes and dislikes has become tranquil, and is like a hero who has conquered all the worlds - he is a true holy man.”

Dhammapada 418 (26:36)

Dharma Discussion – Selfless Service:

How would you feel if you had to take care of someone who was very sick with dysentery, like the sick monk?

Maybe you would feel afraid of getting sick yourself, because it's contagious.

You may feel disgusted by the smell.

You might not know what to do; you may feel unsure of how to take care of someone who is very ill.

Maybe you wouldn't want to touch the soiled clothing or bedsheets.

It's uncomfortable to see someone who is suffering.

There are many other things you would rather do.

The monks at the monastery probably had the same thoughts.

And, they weren't going to get anything in return for helping the sick monk.

Typically, people think that if they help someone in need, then someone will help them when they are in need - an exchange: if I do for you then you will do for me.

They didn't even consider that. They just thought that since the sick monk isn't of any use to them, they don't need to help him.

The Buddha and Venerable Ananda didn't think that way.

What kind of feeling did they have for the sick monk?

They had compassion – they were focused on relieving the suffering of others.

They didn't limit themselves to doing only what they liked to do, or doing only what gives them some reward or benefit.

They weren't thinking about themselves and what they want or don't want.

Instead, they opened their hearts to care for someone who was suffering.

Helping others, or doing a service for others without thinking of what you will get in return is called "selfless service."

It means helping without thinking of what you like or don't like, or of getting a reward. It's the opposite of selfish service, helping only if you get something in return.

It means helping because you want others to be happy.

If we don't get any benefit for ourselves, then why do selfless service?

Actually, there are benefits. Can you think of any?

One benefit is that we become happier when we do selfless service.

Most people think that they are happier when they do what they like to do, and when they do something that gives them money or another kind of reward.

That may give us happiness for a little while.

But we get a much more satisfying and lasting happiness when we help others, or when we help relieve the suffering of others.

For example, what would make you happier, watching a person get saved on TV or actually saving a person's life? Eating a favorite food or feeding a starving dog?

On the other hand, when we always think about ourselves, we become miserable because we think about our disappointments and problems.

The other benefit of selfless service is that we earn merit.

What is merit? Good karma, is the cause of good fortune, good circumstances in the future, such as being healthy, successful, and safe from danger.

We all miss opportunities to do selfless service sometimes.

Can you think of reasons why we don't help when there is an opportunity to help?

We wait for someone else to do it,
or look away from something that should be done,
or ignore someone who could use some help,
or we're not sure exactly what to do to help,
or we think it's someone else's job or someone else's fault,
or we think we can do it later,
or we don't feel like doing it,
Or we are too busy.

We can develop a good habit of helping others, and finding ways to help, by helping people in our family.

Can you think of some examples?

Clearing away all the dishes after meals.

Putting away clean dishes.

Setting the table.

Cleaning up baby sister's or brother's mess.

Helping sister or brother with homework.

Taking out the trash.

Putting away clean laundry.

Putting away groceries.

Taking care of a pet.

If someone in our family is sick, we can offer to help in whatever ways we can, such as bringing them water, or serving them food.

Do you do any of these tasks at home? If not, think about why not.

Maybe it's because your parents have done them all your life.

But if you volunteer to help them, it's a wonderful act of gratitude to your parents for all they do for you, and it shows compassionate to your parents who have to work hard to support your family. And you earn merit by helping them.

Remember the Buddha's advice to the monks, that if you would do a service for him, then do it for others.

Activity: Make a list of ways you can help at home.

Chapter 28 – The Story of Sopaka

A little boy named Sopaka was born to parents who were very poor. He was a very kind-hearted and innocent boy. When Sopaka was very young, his father died suddenly. Later, Sopaka's uncle married his mother and became his stepfather. The stepfather was an angry, cruel man who always scolded and shouted at Sopaka, and even beat him, thinking that Sopaka was just another responsibility that he didn't want to have. He knew Sopaka's mother loved the boy very much, and this frustrated the stepfather even more.

One day, Sopaka got into a quarrel with his cousin, which infuriated the stepfather. That evening, the stepfather told Sopaka to go for a walk with him. Sopaka noticed that he had a kind voice, and thought maybe his mother had asked the stepfather to be nice to him. He innocently hoped that his stepfather was in a better mood.

He went with his stepfather out of the house. There was a cemetery nearby. As they approached it, Sopaka walked closer to his stepfather because he was scared of seeing the awful-looking dead bodies there. Instead of passing by the graveyard, his stepfather walked directly into the graveyard. Sopaka wondered why he was going there, but he dared not wait alone outside. So he walked in also. The stepfather walked near some dead bodies and took out a rope. Sopaka wondered what was going on, but he was so afraid of the dead bodies that he went very close to his stepfather. He watched his stepfather tie the rope around one of the dead bodies. What was he doing?

Suddenly, the stepfather held the other end of the rope toward Sopaka and grabbed Sopaka's hands. In horror, shock and confusion, Sopaka watched his stepfather tie the end of the rope tightly around both of Sopaka's hands. He was tied to the corpse!

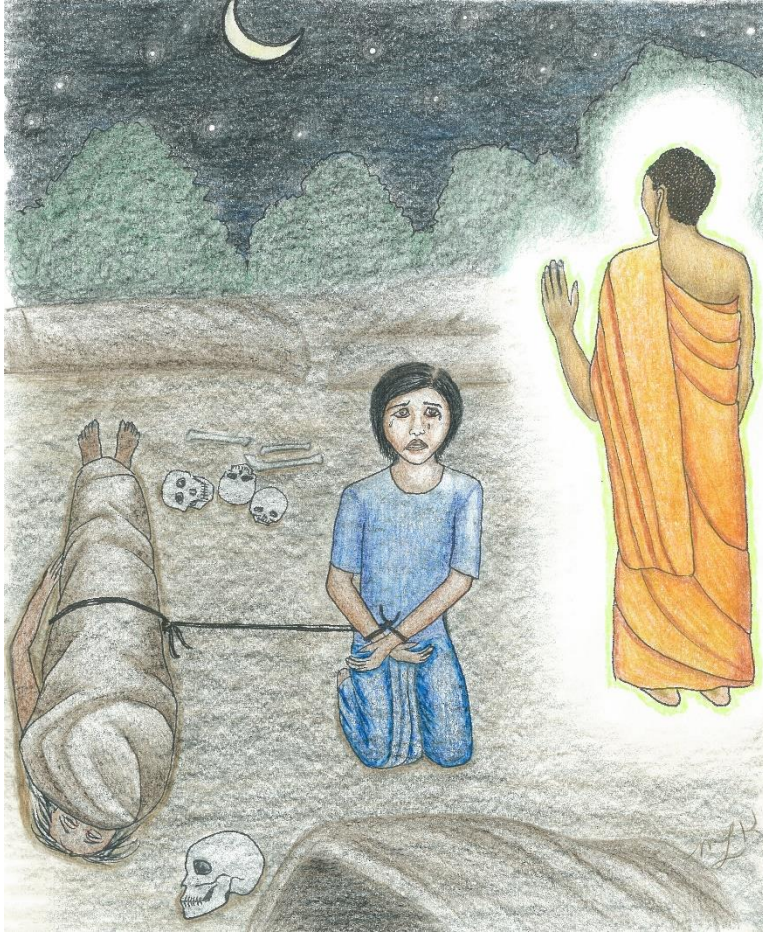
He wailed, "Oh father, don't do this to me, please! I'm scared!"

But the stepfather walked away.

"Don't leave me here, I'm scared!!" Sopaka cried.

He tried to break free, but the rope was very thick and tightly tied around his hands. He tried to walk away, but he couldn't pull the heavy dead body on the other end of the rope. He was stuck there, and absolutely terrified.

It was very dark, and there were noises of animals nearby in the jungle. He saw jackals prowling around. He cried louder and called out as loud as he could for help. But there was no one. He was totally alone.



But through his tears, he saw a bright light. Was it his imagination? Or could it be someone coming with a torch? The light was much brighter than a torch. Then he heard a kind voice calling his name, “Sopaka.” Was he imagining it?

The kind voice called his name again, saying “Don’t be afraid, I am here to help you.”

Then suddenly the rope that bound his wrists so tightly became loose and fell off. He saw a holy man in robes, with long earlobes and the kindest, most loving face he had ever seen, surrounded by a bright light.

He thought that he was in the cemetery, but suddenly he was sitting in a building with the holy

man. It was the Buddha, who by his supernatural power had broken the ropes and suddenly transported Sopaka to the Jetavana Monastery, far away from the cemetery.

He was given clean clothes and food. He was silent, amazed, and couldn’t believe what had happened.

Meanwhile, the stepfather had returned to the house.

Immediately, Sopaka’s mother asked, “Where is my son?”

The stepfather acted surprised and said nothing.

The mother was terribly upset. She looked everywhere for him, calling out for him over and over again. But there was only silence in the dark night. She felt helpless and cried all night.

Finally, she thought, “People say that the Buddha knows everything, the past, present and future. Maybe he can tell me where my son is.”

She went early in the morning to Jetavana Monastery, and walked into the temple. The Buddha saw her worried, sad face with tears running down her cheeks.

He asked, "Sister, why are you crying?"

She answered, sobbing, "My only son, he went with my husband for a walk last night but didn't come home. He's been missing all night."

The Buddha said softly, "Sister, your son is here, safe with me."

But where was he? Sopaka's mother didn't see him so she didn't understand what he meant.

The Buddha said, "I will show you."

But first he taught her the Dharma. He taught her that sons are not a protection, and family members are not a refuge from suffering. Instead, the Dharma protects us from suffering and is a refuge from suffering, fear, grief and sorrow. He said that it is no use looking for children or family members without looking for the path to Nirvana. She deeply understood what he was teaching her.

He led her to another room and pointed to a young boy with a happy radiant face, sitting with monks dressed in robes. It was Sopaka! She was so relieved that he was safe, and gave her permission for Sopaka to become a monk and join the other monks living at the monastery. His mother was so happy that he could live a holy life free from the abuse of the stepfather.

Sopaka's mother, now a devoted follower of the Buddha, went home alone but feeling peaceful.

Questions:

1. What type of person was Sopaka? (kind-hearted and innocent)
2. Why didn't Sopaka run away from his stepfather when they went to the cemetery? (he was scared, so he stayed closed to the stepfather)
3. What did the stepfather do to Sopaka in the cemetery? (tied him to a dead body)
4. What did Sopaka see after he called for help in the cemetery? (a bright light, and then a holy man in robes, the Buddha)
5. What did the Buddha teach Sopaka's mother about sons and family members? (that they don't protect us from suffering)
6. What did the Buddha say is a protection and refuge from suffering? (the Dharma)

What the Buddha said:

“Pāṇimhi ce vano nāssa, hareyya pāṇinā viṣaṃ, nābbaṇam visamanveti;
natthi pāpaṃ akubbato.”

“If on the hand there is no wound, one may even carry poison in it. Poison does not affect the hand without any wounds. In the same way, no evil happens to one who does no evil act.”

Dhammapada 124 (9:9)

Dharma Discussion - Courage:

The Buddha protected Sopaka from terrible suffering

Poor Sopaka was trapped in a cemetery where he could have suffered for days in anguish and horror and died. But suddenly, his unfortunate situation changed.

The Buddha protected him - saved him - with miraculous powers.

Did the Buddha go in person to save everyone who was unhappy or suffering?

No, he went out and saved the people whom he could help not just with a particular problem, but with the way end all of their suffering: those who were ready to learn the Dharma.

Who is ready to learn the Dharma? Some people are not interested in it or don't understand it when they hear it. But those who have enough merit - enough good karma from past lives – are interested in it and understand when they hear it.

Sopaka must have had a lot of good karma - made a lot of merit in past lives – to be saved by the Buddha and become his student.

He must have had negative karma also, to be abused by his terrible stepfather.

But he only had to suffer a little while before the Buddha saved him, and he was then fully protected; the cruel stepfather could never again hurt him.

Everyone experiences some suffering as a result of negative actions we have done in past lives, our negative karmas.

Dharma can't prevent the results of our past karmas.

But the Dharma can protect us from harm and give us courage.

How can the Dharma protect us? Can you think of any examples?

When we are mindful, when we practice mindfulness, then we're more aware of what is happening around us, and we're more careful, which protects us from dangers and accidents.

When we're kind and compassionate, others are less likely to be angry with us or want to harm us.

When we are kind to someone, they feel happier and kinder toward others, and those others feel happier and kinder to other people, so we are spreading kindness, like a domino effect.

Remember, kindness is contagious!

When we are in danger and we chant a mantra, for example, “Namo Buddhaya,” or “Om Mani Padme Hum” then the merit of chanting may prevent us from being harmed.

When we can calm our mind with mindfulness and what we learned from the Dharma, then we have less stress in our body, which protects us from illness.

When we're afraid, worried, angry or upset, our negative thoughts come into our mind again and again, repeating over and over.

We may be trying to find a solution to the problem, but anxiety doesn't help us.

What can we do to calm and comfort our mind?

We can take a walk, read, or talk to a friend.

But is there something in the Dharma that can give us courage?

And we can do prayers, Buddhist chanting (silently or aloud), practice mindfulness. or meditate to make our mind more calm, clear, and confident, so our fear and worry fade away.

How can we practice mindfulness? Close your eyes and be aware of what you hear and what you feel in the body, right now at this moment, and then at the next moment, and so on, moment by moment.

While we do this, upsetting thoughts disappear.

And we are less likely to say or do something that we regret later.

We can visualize the Buddha – imagine him in our mind – while we chant a mantra.

Doing something to help others also takes our mind off our worry. For example, helping a parent, sister, brother, other family member, teacher or friend distracts you from upsetting thoughts, and also makes merit.

Remembering that everything is impermanent, that whatever problem we have will be gone soon, helps calm our mind and gives us courage.

Feeling compassion for all beings - even bullies and troublemakers - wishing that they be free from suffering, reduces our hatred and fear of others, and then we don't feel that they are so threatening.

We can feel confident knowing that we are now making merit by learning and following Dharma, and not creating negative karmas, so we are creating a good future for ourselves.

What if something seems unfair, and we need courage to fix the problem?

If we feel angry or hateful, then we suffer with those negative emotions and may do something we regret later.

Instead, we can remember that everything happens due to causes and conditions: past bad actions - negative karmas - are the cause for unpleasant situations to occur, resulting in suffering.

So rather than holding onto anger and hatred, you can work toward a solution:

If someone treated you unfairly, when your mind is calm, you can explain to them how you feel and try to come to an understanding.

If others were treated unfairly, you can try to help them so they don't continue to be treated unfairly. By helping them, you make merit which helps both of you.

Activity:

Choose a favorite mantra or Buddhist chant and write it on paper and decorate it as you like. then post it in your room or someplace where you see it, so you remember to chant it often. It helps you to remember it when you are feeling afraid, worried, or upset.

Chapter 29 – Nagasamāla and Meghiya

One day the Buddha was on a journey with a monk called Venerable Nāgasamāla who was serving as the Buddha’s assistant. They were walking along a path, or dirt road. After having walked for a few hours, Venerable Nāgasamāla saw that a little distance ahead of them, the path split into two directions. They had to decide whether to follow the path going toward the right or to follow the path going toward the left.

Venerable Nāgasamāla pointed to the path on the left and said, “Lord, this is the way. Let’s go this way.”

The Buddha pointed to the road on the right and replied, “This is the way, Nāgasamāla. Let’s go this way.”

Venerable Nāgasamāla was sure that the road on the left was a much shorter way to their destination that could save them a lot of time.

He again pointed to the left and said, “Lord, that is the way.”

The Buddha again pointed to the right and said, “Nāgasamāla, this is the way.”

Venerable Nāgasamāla was frustrated that the Buddha did not agree with him.

For the third, time, he pointed to the left and firmly said, “Lord, *that* is the way.”

For the third time, the Buddha again pointed to the right and said, “Nāgasamāla, this is the way.”

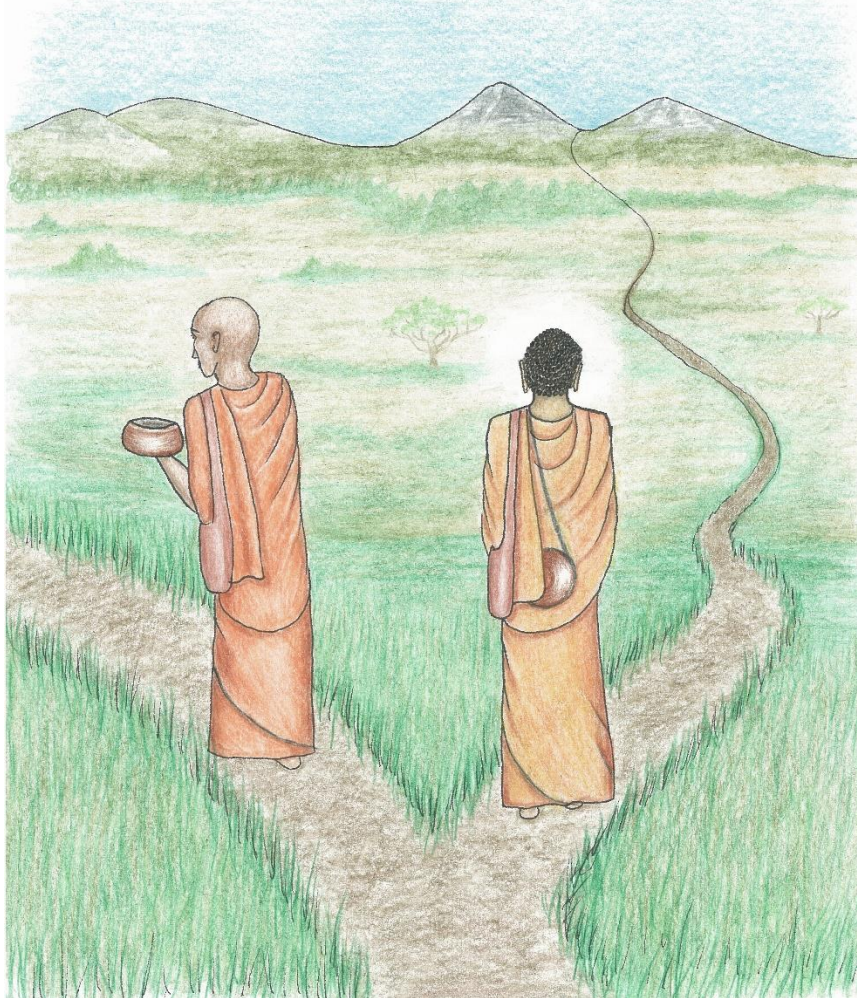
The Buddha knew something that the monk didn’t know. But Venerable Nāgasamāla was thinking only about what made sense to him—that they should take the shortest path to their destination. It was very clear to him which path to take, and he couldn’t understand why the Buddha didn’t agree with him. He also didn’t like to be told that he was wrong. His frustration turned into anger.

He was determined to take the path that he knew was the shortest. He had been carrying the Buddha’s bowl and outer robe all along, and if the Buddha was not going to follow his advice on which path to take, he had to give those things back to him. But he was so angry, he just bent down and put them on the ground.

The Buddha did not get upset about this misbehavior, but just said, “My bowl and robe, Nāgasamāla?”

Stubbornly, Venerable Nāgasamāla did not answer and did not move. He was too angry to respond.

So, the Buddha bent down and picked up his robe and bowl, slinging them over his shoulder to carry them himself. He slowly walked alone up the path to the right.



Venerable Nāgasamāla walked alone along the path to the left. He felt sure that the Buddha would notice his mistake and come quickly to the path on which Venerable Nāgasamāla was walking. He walked confidently without looking back.

Suddenly, he heard a noise coming from the direction of some bushes next to the road, and the next moment, several robbers crawled out from behind the bushes.

One of them immediately hit him on the head and another one kicked him. One of them broke his bowl, slamming it down onto the road, and another took his upper robe and

tore it.

After they ran away, Venerable Nāgasamāla noticed that his head was bleeding and his robes were badly torn. He picked up the pieces of his broken bowl. He was in shock. Wishing to be with the Buddha again, he turned around. He walked very quickly with his torn robe and broken bowl back to the split in the road and then walked along the road that the Buddha had chosen. He finally caught up to the Buddha and called out to him.

The Buddha stopped, and Venerable Nāgasamāla bowed with deep respect and devotion and told him what had happened.

The Buddha said, “A wise man and a foolish man walked and lived together. The wise leave what they know is bad.” The Buddha meant that when a person who has not yet developed wisdom is with a wise person, he should follow the advice of a wise person, who knows to get away from what is bad.

On another occasion, Venerable Meghiya was serving as the Buddha's assistant. One morning, he went to the Buddha and said,

"Lord, I want to go to Jantugrama to receive food offerings."

The Buddha replied, "It's time to do as you think is right, Meghiya."

Venerable Meghiya took his bowl and outer robe and went to Jantugrama. He went up to some houses, where people put some food into his bowl. On his way back to where the Buddha and the monks were staying, he walked along the side of a river. During his walk he saw a place where there were many mango trees.

He thought, "This beautiful and inviting mango grove is a good place to stay for the spiritual practice of a person who seeks to practice. If the Buddha allows it, I shall come to this mango grove to practice."

With great inspiration to meditate intensely in the mango grove, he went to the Buddha and told him about it. The Buddha's reply was,

"Wait, Meghiya, we are still alone. Wait until some other monk comes."

Venerable Meghiya did not understand why he should have to wait in order to get permission from the Buddha to meditate. Why should he have to wait?

Venerable Meghiya said, "There is nothing more left for you to do, Lord. But we monks still have something left to do. We need to practice. If it is allowed, Lord, I would like to go to that mango grove for my spiritual practice."

For the second time, the Buddha's reply was, "Wait, Meghiya, we are still alone. Wait until another monk comes."

Venerable Meghiya, feeling impatient, was insistent, and asked again. He didn't want to simply obey—to wait as the Buddha told him to do—because he didn't see any reason to wait.

The Buddha, however, knew that it was not the right time for Venerable Meghiya to be able to meditate well. Nevertheless, he replied,

"Since you say 'practice,' Meghiya, what can I say to you? It is time for you to do now as you think is right."

Venerable Meghiya bowed and left to go to the mango grove, where he sat down under a tree for his daytime meditation practice. He was looking forward to having a great meditation now that he was in such a beautiful place.

But that didn't happen. He started to have many negative thoughts. He even had horrible thoughts of hatred, harming others and cruelty.

He thought, "It is surprising, here I am a monk who has left home and family life and yet I am harassed by these evil, unwholesome thoughts!"

In the evening, he went back to the Buddha and told him what happened.

The Buddha said, "Meghiya, when a person has not yet reached the goal, five things will lead him toward the goal: First, a monk has good friends and companions. Second, a monk is perfect in virtue, obeying the monks' rules, restraining himself to avoid doing even small misbehaviors. Third, he speaks in accordance with the Dharma on subjects leading to enlightenment. Fourth, he lets go of unwholesome things and is persistent in doing wholesome things. Fifth, a monk has understanding and wisdom that leads to the end of suffering."

The Buddha said further, "But in order to be established in those five things, a monk should, in addition, do these four things: give up attachment to the body to reduce desires, have lovingkindness to get rid of hatred, practice mindfulness of breathing to stop the rambling thoughts in the mind, and remember impermanence."

He continued further, "Bad thoughts and useless thoughts come and tempt the mind. Not understanding these thoughts, the mind chases after them. A man who understands these thoughts gets rid of them with mindfulness. And one who is enlightened is done with them all, because no more temptation stirs up his mind."

Questions:

1. Why didn't Venerable Nāgasamāla agree with the Buddha about which path to take? (he was sure that the path to the left was much shorter and would save them a lot of time)
2. How did Venerable Nāgasamāla feel when the Buddha wouldn't agree with him on the path to take? (frustrated and angry)
3. Why didn't Venerable Nāgasamāla give the Buddha his bowl and robe? (he was angry)
4. Why didn't Venerable Meghiya obey the Buddha's instruction to wait? (he didn't see any reason to wait)
5. What happened to them when they did what they wanted to do, against the Buddha's instruction? (Venerable Nāgasamāla got beaten by robbers, and Venerable Meghiya had bad thoughts when he was trying to meditate)
6. What did Venerable Nāgasamāla and Venerable Meghiya learn? (they should follow the Buddha's advice, they should obey his instructions)

What the Buddha said:

“Karaṇīyaṃ atthakusulena, yaṃ taṃ santaṃ padaṃ abhisamecca,
Sakko ujū ca sūjū ca, suvaco c’assa mudu anatimāni.”

“One who does good, who wishes to skillfully attain peace, should act this way: One should be able, straight, upright, obedient, gentle and humble.”

Karaṇīyametta Sutta

Dharma Discussion - Obedience:

In the story we heard about not obeying instructions.
Also the Buddha mentioned obeying the monks’ rules.
When you hear the word “obey,” do you think of a particular person or situation?
Maybe you think of obeying your parents, or obeying your teachers.
Or you think of obeying classroom rules, or obeying rules of a game or sport.
Or obeying laws such as traffic laws, or obeying rules at a swimming pool.
Maybe you think of training a pet to obey you.

Think for a moment about what would happen if we had no rules and if no one ever told us what to do and not to do.

It could be dangerous—we and others could be injured.
And there would be chaos—too much disturbance, confusion and distraction.
So, why is it important to obey rules, and obey parents and teachers?
To protect us and others from harm, danger and chaos.

The Buddha’s students—his monks—were supposed to obey him as their teacher.
But, like students in our modern world, sometimes they didn’t obey.
Why didn’t Venerable Nāgasamāla just follow the Buddha’s advice on the path to take, and why didn’t Venerable Meghiya just obey the Buddha and wait?
Because they thought they knew better than the Buddha; they didn’t see any reason to do what he said.

Have you ever been in a similar situation, where a parent or teacher asked you to do something, and you didn’t see any reason to do what they told you to do, so you didn’t do it?
Or you didn’t want to obey because you think your parent or teacher is being too strict?
If you ignore them, complain, or ask “why,” how do you think they’ll react?
They may think you’re just trying to avoid doing what they’re asking you to do, and get frustrated or upset with you.
What might be a better way to respond?
Tell them your reason for not obeying—explain why you think you shouldn’t do what they are asking you to do.

Even if you feel impatient, like the monks in the story, try to have compassion for your parents and teachers.

Consider that they are trying to make a peaceful, orderly environment for everyone, and it's good for you to support that.

You may not always agree with them, and like the monks in the story you might think you know better.

Of course, parents and teachers can make mistakes, and you might know something they don't know.

But if they have good values and a good heart, appreciate that they have wisdom from many years of experience and are trying to guide you in the best way they know.

Also, when you don't agree with what a parent or teacher asks you to do, consider whether they may be stressed, in a hurry or busy and don't have time to discuss whether you should obey them or not.

At those times it's best to just obey them even if we don't agree, as long as no one could be harmed.

What if you're so angry or upset, like Venerable Nāgasamāla, that you don't want to do what a parent or teacher tells you to do?

Emotions or moods can make us feel overwhelmed, especially when we are being told what to do.

Sometimes we need to take time to calm down before we are ready to respond appropriately. So, what can you do in that situation, instead of responding with anger?

You can ask for a little time to calm down first.

Some young people have a habit of refusing to do what a parent or teacher instructs or advises them to do, or they question everything they are asked to do.

For example, have you seen someone who, when directed to do something by a parent or teacher, often asks "why?" or "why do I have to do it?"

Or someone who often just ignores what the parent or teacher says?

Or someone who often shouts or complains loudly when asked to do something?

Or someone who often violates rules, such as classroom rules?

These people disrupt the classroom, the family, or whatever environment they are in, making it unpleasant.

Their behaviors are the result of causes and conditions.

Can you think of some reasons why they behave that way?

Maybe these kids have difficulties with family, or they've suffered some trauma, so they don't trust or respect others, or can't stand being told what to do.

They may have learned bad behaviors from social media, other kids, or adults who are abusive and uncaring. Maybe they crave attention and conflict.

In any case, they are suffering, so we can be compassionate and wish that they overcome their problems and suffering, and learn the value of obeying rules and not being disruptive.

Instead of having those good thoughts, some young people follow the disobedient and disrespectful behavior of others, thinking they are tough, fierce and powerful.

And then they get the attention they want.

More people nowadays, including adults, think that acting disrespectful toward others shows power over them.

So kids who also want that power and attention follow or imitate those behaviors.

Have you ever noticed any kids who do that?

They don't know how to be strong, powerful and in control in a constructive way, by developing their mind through the Dharma.

So they try to be powerful in a way that's destructive, by harming others, following foolish behavior, and creating negative karma for themselves.

Their behavior is a reminder to us of what not to do, and not to follow the disrespectful behavior of other people, but instead to think for ourselves what is the right thing to do, according to the Dharma.

Activity:

The popular game "Simon Says" changed to "Wise one says":

Students stand next to each other at a starting line, facing another student who is the leader.

The leader quickly gives the other students commands such as "Wise one says touch your toes,"

"Wise one says turn around," "Wise one says touch your nose," "Wise one says raise your

hands," "Wise one says hands on your hips," "Wise one says jump," or "Wise one says raise

your right foot." Occasionally the leader gives a command without saying "Wise one says."

Students should obey immediately each command preceded by "Wise one says," but must be careful not to obey any commands without it.

Each student who obeys a command that doesn't include "Wise one says" or who doesn't immediately obey a command with "Wise one says" must sit down and is out of the game.

Commands can be given faster and faster to make the game more challenging. The last person out wins and becomes the next leader.

This game demonstrates obeying the instructions of our parents, teachers and other appropriate authority figures ("wise ones") and not blindly following what friends and others tell us to do.

Chapter 30 – Devadatta’s Anger

Devadatta was a cousin of the Buddha, and a playmate of Prince Siddhartha when they were children. He was the one who had shot a swan and argued with Prince Siddhartha over who owns the swan. When he grew up, he was ordained as a Buddhist monk, so he was a student of the Buddha.

Yet, after having been a monk for many years, he still had desires for popularity, admiration and fame. One day, when the Buddha was 72 years old, Devadatta, also an elderly man, sitting alone, thought,

“Who can I influence so that I can gain a lot of honor and fame?”

Then he thought, “There is Prince Ajatasattu. He is young with a glorious future. What if I win him over so he becomes devoted to me? Then I can get a lot of admiration, popularity and whatever I desire.”

So, he started walking to Rajagaha to visit Prince Ajatasattu, the son of the good King Bimbisara. When Devadatta arrived at the palace, he used his supernatural powers to disguise himself. He changed his form into a small boy with snakes around his body, and then sat on the prince’s lap in order to shock the prince.

Prince Ajatasattu felt very anxious, seeing this strange child with live snakes wrapped around his waist sitting on his lap. He was scared, worried about what might happen. What kind of mysterious person was this? He suspected it was some kind of powerful and dangerous being in disguise. How did it get in the palace, why was it here, and what did it want?

Devadatta in the form of the strange boy asked, “Are you afraid of me, prince?”

Prince Ajatasattu replied, “Yes, I am afraid. Who are you?”

“I am Devadatta,” he replied.

The prince said, “If you are Devadatta, Lord, then please show yourself in your own form.”

Devadatta then appeared in his normal form as a monk, wearing his monks’ robes and holding his bowl, standing in front of the prince.

The prince was very impressed, and thought that Devadatta was one of the greatest, most accomplished monks to have such supernatural powers. So, he served Devadatta with deep devotion morning and evening, with many food offerings and with many carriages pulled by horses to travel around in so Devadatta wouldn’t need to walk.

Devadatta then felt greatly honored, powerful and famous, to have the well-respected Prince Ajatasattu serving him so well. But now that he had that desire fulfilled, he wanted something more. He wanted to rule the monks, to be the leader of all the Buddhist monks. Interestingly, at the same time that he had that wish, his supernatural powers disappeared.

Meanwhile, the Buddha was on his way to Rajagaha. After he arrived, some of his monks said to him,

“Lord, Prince Ajatasattu goes to serve Devadatta each morning and evening with many horse-drawn carriages and lavish offerings of food.” The monks seemed disturbed because Devadatta, while having supernatural powers, was not an exceptionally good monk, so they didn’t think he deserved such honor and devotion.

The Buddha responded, “Monks, don’t be angry or upset about Devadatta’s gifts, honor and fame. If someone holds raw meat under a fierce dog’s nose, the dog will get much more fierce. Similarly, as long as Prince Ajatasattu keeps serving Devadatta as he is doing, Devadatta’s goodness will decrease and not increase. Devadatta’s gifts, honor and fame have arisen for his own self-destruction.”

One day, sometime later, the Buddha was teaching the Dharma, surrounded by a huge crowd of followers, including King Bimbisara. Devadatta got up from his seat, arranged his robe over his shoulder, raised his hands with palms together respectfully toward the Buddha and said to him,

“Lord, you are now old, burdened with age, advanced in life, and coming to the last stage of life. You should now rest, and live in bliss in this life. You can hand over the Sangha of monks to me. I will take care of the Sangha of monks.”

The Buddha responded, “Enough, Devadatta. Don’t think about taking charge of the Sangha of monks.”

But Devadatta insisted, again proposing that he lead the monks. The Buddha said again,

“Enough, Devadatta. Don’t think about taking charge of the Sangha of monks.”

Devadatta was persistent, suggesting again that he should lead the monks.

Then the Buddha said, “I would not hand over the Sangha of monks even to Sariputta and Moggallana. Why should I let the Sangha be ruled by such a lazy person, a clot of spit as you?”

Devadatta, in shock, realized, “In public, including in front of the king, the Buddha has disgraced me with the words ‘clot of spit’ and praised Sariputta and Moggallana rather than me!”

Devadatta was totally offended and enraged. How dare the Buddha speak of him like that!

There was nothing he could do or say, especially in front of all those people. He silently bowed to the Buddha and left.

The Buddha later spoke to the monks. He instructed them to announce to the public that Devadatta had changed, and that whatever Devadatta does is his own responsibility and the Buddha and Sangha of monks have no part in it.

When the people of the town of Rajagaha heard the message about Devadatta, denouncing him, they responded in two different ways. The people who were unwise, without good judgment and without much faith and confidence in the Buddha, said,

“These monks, sons of the Sakyans, are jealous of Devadatta’s popularity, honor and fame.”

The people who were wise, who had good judgment and faith and confidence in the Buddha, said, “This isn’t just an ordinary matter for the Buddha to have had Devadatta denounced and separated from the Sangha.”

With his desire to rule the Sangha frustrated, and having been insulted in public, Devadatta had such intense anger that he started to have terrible thoughts of hatred and revenge. He went to Prince Ajatasattu and said to him,

“Men used to live long, but now they don’t live so long. Maybe you will die while still only a prince. Then you would not be able to rule the land as a king. So why don’t you kill your father and become a king? And I shall kill the monk Gotama and become the new Buddha myself.”

Prince Ajatasattu thought, “The Lord Devadatta is mighty and powerful, so he should know what is the right thing to do.”

The prince fastened a dagger on his thigh and then in the middle of the day, he went toward the inner palace where his father was. He felt fearful, anxious, and worried. The king’s guards at the entry of the inner palace saw him and thought he had a suspicious look on his face. Although he was the king’s son, they didn’t trust him, so they arrested and searched him. They found the dagger strapped to his leg, and asked him,

“What is it you want to do, prince?”

The prince, having been raised to speak only the truth, said, “I want to kill my father.”

A guard asked, “Who prompted you to do this?”

“The Lord Devadatta,” the prince replied.

The palace officers weren’t sure what to do in this strange situation. Some thought the prince and Devadatta should be killed, along with all the Buddhist monks because they were

associated with Devadatta. Others thought that the monks should not be killed since they had done nothing wrong, but that the prince and Devadatta should be killed. Still others thought that no one should be killed, but that the king should be informed and his orders carried out.

The guards brought Prince Ajatasattu before King Bimbisara, told him what happened, and asked about punishment for the prince, Devadatta and the monks.

The king asked, "What do the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha have to do with this? Hasn't Devadatta been publicly denounced in Rajagaha by the Buddha?" The king then turned to his son and asked, "Why do you want to kill me, prince?"

"I want the kingdom, sire," answered his son.

"If you want the kingdom, prince, the kingdom is yours," the king offered.

So, the king gave him the kingdom. Just like that, the father simply gave all his power as king to the son who wanted to kill him.

Now that Ajatasattu was in command of the kingdom, Devadatta made a request to the new King Ajatasattu:

"Great king, send some men to take the monk Gotama's life."

The new king ordered the men standing near him: "Do as the Lord Devadatta says."

Devadatta instructed one of the men, "Go, friend, the monk Gotama lives in this place that I will describe. Take his life and return by the path I will tell you." Then Devadatta privately told the other men to stand along certain points of the return path and wait for the first man to come along the path.

After Devadatta gave him the details, the man took his sword, shield, bow and arrows, and went to where the Buddha was staying. But as he came near the Buddha, he became so frightened that he stood still, his body frozen in fear.

The Buddha saw him and called out, "Come, friend, don't be afraid."

The man put down his weapons, went up to the Buddha and very humbly bowed to him, saying, "Lord, I have done wrong like a fool confused and blundering, since I came here with evil intent, with intent to do murder. Lord, may you forgive my wrongdoing."

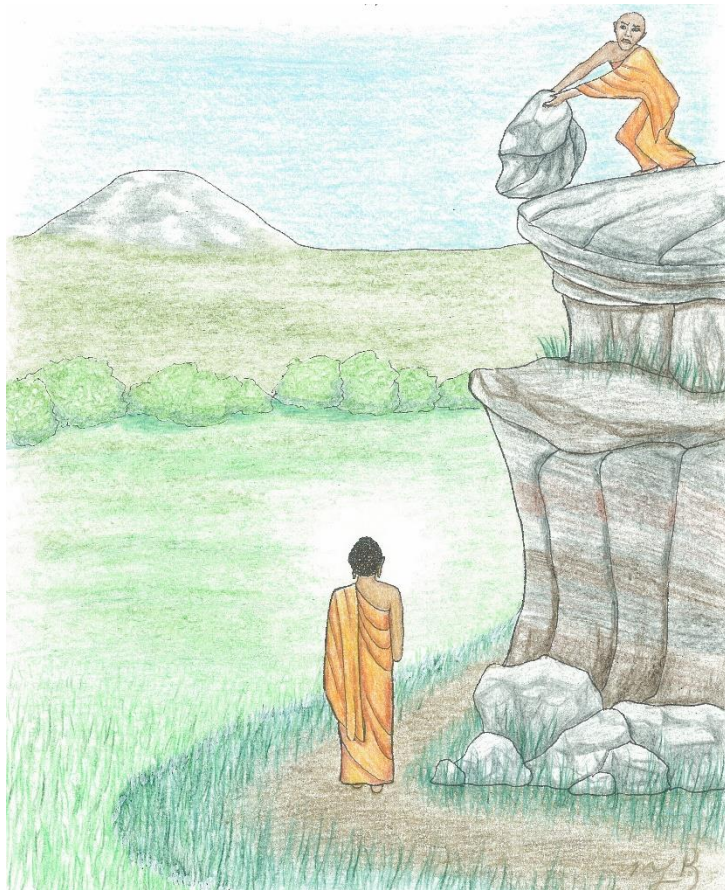
The Buddha said, "Surely, friend, you have done wrong like a fool confused and blundering, since you came here with evil intent, with intent to commit murder. But since you admit that you were wrong, in accordance with the Dharma, we forgive it. The teachings on discipline are increased when a man sees his wrongdoing and acts in accordance with the Dharma and restrains himself from wrongdoing in the future."

The man heard the Buddha teach the Dharma, and asked the Buddha for permission to become his follower. The Buddha accepted him and instructed him to go back to Ajatasattu's palace by another path. When the men posted along the original path didn't see the man returning, they wondered what happened, and went to where the Buddha was sitting at the root of a tree. The men went up to him and when they heard him teach the Dharma, they became his followers.

Meanwhile, when the first man arrived at Ajatasattu's palace, he went to Devadatta and admitted,

"I have not taken the Buddha's life, Lord. The Buddha is mighty and powerful."

Devadatta replied, "Okay, friend, don't take the monk Gotama's life. I will take the monk Gotama's life myself."



Later, Devadatta climbed up Vulture Peak Rock when the Buddha was walking below in the shade of the rock. Devadatta pushed a huge stone down so it would hit and kill the Buddha. As it rolled down, the stone was caught between two pieces of the rock, but a very sharp piece of the stone fell and cut the Buddha's foot so that it bled. It was an extremely serious and painful wound.

The Buddha looked up and said to Devadatta:

"Misguided man, you have made much bad karma, for with evil intent, with intent to commit murder, you have caused a Buddha to bleed."

Devadatta did not seem to care, as he soon had another plan.

In Rajagaha here was an elephant named Nalagiri that had violently killed a man. Devadatta went to the elephant stables, and started talking to the elephant-keepers. He mentioned that he knew the king very well and that he could influence the king to increase their pay and food, and then suggested,

"When the monk Gautama comes down this road, let the elephant Nalagiri loose into the road."

That was simple enough to do, and they hoped Devadatta could get the king to give them more pay and more food, so the elephant keepers agreed.

The next morning, the Buddha and a group of monks went to the city to receive food. They walked along the road that Devadatta mentioned to the elephant keepers.

The elephant-keepers saw them coming and let Nalagiri loose on the road. Nalagiri saw the Buddha coming in the distance, and he raised up his trunk and tail and spread out his ears, and then charged toward the Buddha.

The monks saw the elephant in the distance and exclaimed,

“Lord, the savage elephant Nalagiri, the man-killer, is loose on the road! Lord, turn back! Lord, turn back!”

The Buddha calmly said, “Come, monks, don’t be afraid. It is impossible, it cannot happen, that anyone can take a Buddha’s life by violence. When a Buddha dies, it is not because of violence by another being.”

Nevertheless, the monks begged the Buddha to turn back. They didn’t want him to be injured or attacked by the elephant.

People in the area anxiously looked at the elephant and monks on the road to see what would happen.

The Buddha thought only of loving-kindness toward Nalagiri. The elephant felt the intense love of the Buddha, and then lowered his trunk and walked up to him, and stood in front of him. The Buddha patted Nalagiri’s forehead and spoke kind words of instruction about karma. With his trunk, Nalagiri picked up dust on the road around the Buddha’s feet and sprinkled it on his head, and then quietly walked back to his stable, now a tamed and peaceful elephant.

The people of the town spread the news about Devadatta trying to kill the Buddha, and Devadatta’s fame and honor faded away. The people who doubted the Buddha then began to have faith and confidence in him.

Questions:

1. What did Devadatta want to have when he went to visit Prince Ajatasattu? (honor, fame, popularity, admiration, whatever he wants)
2. What did Devadatta do with his supernatural powers to influence Prince Ajatasattu to believe he was a great and powerful monk? (he changed his form into a small boy with snakes around his waist)

3. Why did Devadatta become so angry at the Buddha? (the Buddha wouldn't let him be the leader of the monks and insulted him, and praised Sariputta and Moggallana)
4. Why did Prince Ajatasattu try to kill his father, the king? (Devadatta told him to do it)
5. What did the Buddha explain to the monks about why Devadatta could not kill the Buddha? (Buddhas cannot be killed by violence)
6. How did the Buddha tame the man-killing elephant Nalagiri? (with loving-kindness, he patted the elephant and spoke kind words about karma)

What the Buddha said:

“Paradukkhūpadānena, attano sukhamicchati, verasamsaggasamsattho, verā so na parimuccati.”

“Entangled by the bonds of anger, he who seeks his own happiness by causing pain to others is never free from anger.”

Dhammapada 291 (21:2)

Dharma Discussion - Anger:

Were there any strange events in this story that you found difficult to believe?

One strange event was a monk transforming his body into a young boy with live snakes around him.

You might wonder, why would a monk have supernatural powers? And how did he get them?

The Buddha had supernatural powers that were used for showing people that he was fully enlightened, so they would believe in what he had to teach, the Dharma.

Some monks also developed supernatural powers as a result of their intense meditation and spiritual practice, but the Buddha cautioned them not to show off with them or use them for other negative or selfish purposes.

Devadatta had these powers but did he follow the Buddha's advice? No, he used his powers for selfish purposes.

Another strange event was that the Buddha insulted Devadatta.

We might expect the Buddha to behave always as an example of perfect behavior. Then why would he insult someone?

His purpose was to teach others the Dharma, and sometimes the best way to teach was to do or say something that might seem unkind but eventually would be most helpful to them.

He insulted Devadatta because he knew that it would reveal the hidden, destructive anger inside Devadatta, and that ultimately it was the best way for Devadatta, and others, to learn.

Sure enough, it had the intended result: Devadatta became extremely angry. Why did he become so angry? Was it only because he was insulted? No, it was also because he had a strong desire for more power, popularity and admiration, and the Buddha frustrated that desire.

We, too, experience anger when our desires are frustrated, when we really want something and we can't have it, or it is taken away from us. The more desires and expectations we have, the more often we feel disappointed or angry.

Can anger be useful, something that can help us?

Yes, anger motivates us to get away, or protect or defend ourselves or others from someone who is harmful. We show anger to tell someone they are misbehaving.

For example, we may show anger toward someone who is abusive, and a parent may show anger toward a child who is misbehaving.

Those are constructive, or useful, types of anger.

But when anger is not constructive, or when we hold onto our anger for too long, it harms us. Then it is destructive. How is it destructive?

Let's think about what happens in the mind when we are angry.

What kind of thoughts might arise in your mind about a person who makes you feel very angry? We may think about how terrible that person is, we wish that they suffer for what they did, or we may have thoughts of revenge.

We may feel envy or jealousy toward a person who got something we didn't get.

We may feel anger toward a person who got something good but didn't deserve it.

These thoughts of hatred, ill-will, revenge or envy disturb our minds.

When you have these thoughts, are you able to concentrate well on other things? Can you communicate well and make good decisions? Probably not. Anger distracts us, and takes away our ability to think, speak and act carefully and reasonably.

It can make us say or do things we later regret, that make us suffer later.

For example, we say or do things that hurt others, then we may lose friends.

Can anger harm our body, too? Yes, having a lot of anger over time causes harmful changes in the body, including harm to the heart, immune system, and digestion.

How can we let go of our anger so we don't hold onto it for too long, and so that we don't do or say something we would regret later?

Here are some ideas that may help you in different situations:

When a friend upsets you, think about whether you really want to hurt or lose the friend. To keep your friendship, try to avoid talking when you're very angry. Wait until you calm down so you can communicate better.

When someone is trying to upset you, remember that calmness can be the best weapon. Acting calm can make them lose interest in trying to upset you.

Remember that “hurt people (are those who) hurt people” —those who hurt others are hurting inside. This helps you develop compassion rather than hatred.

Remember that everyone will receive the results of their karma. Those who harm others will suffer the results of what they do, and it’s not your responsibility to punish them, which might create negative karma for yourself.

Wish or pray that the person who upset you becomes happy and peaceful, and then they will stop upsetting you.

Try to think of good qualities of the person who upset you, or good things they have done.

Remember that you can choose when to let go of your anger. The sooner you let go of it the sooner you can enjoy your day.

Breathe deeply—breathe out anger, breathe in peace.

Close your eyes and be mindful, by noticing everything you hear and feel.

Chant or say a prayer.

Go outside, take a walk, or do an outside activity--skateboarding, basketball, etc.

Talk to a friend.

Write in a journal or diary.

Draw a picture or cartoon.

Read a book.

Listen to music.

Clean your room.

Lay down, or take a nap.

Take a bath or shower.

Drink cold water or juice to cool your mind.

Look in a mirror—rather than looking angry, try to relax your face.

Activity:

Make a list of ways to control anger -- Each student lists on paper some ways to calm anger, then posts the list in a handy place at home so it can be referred to when they are struggling with anger.

Chapter 31 – Devadatta Divides the Sangha

Many people lost respect for Devadatta because he tried to kill the Buddha. But Devadatta still had some of the Buddha’s student monks as friends, and they often went together as a big group to eat lunch at the homes of families in the area. They would tell the family whatever they wanted the family to offer to them before they arrived at the home. This annoyed the families. They complained to each other about the monks, saying:

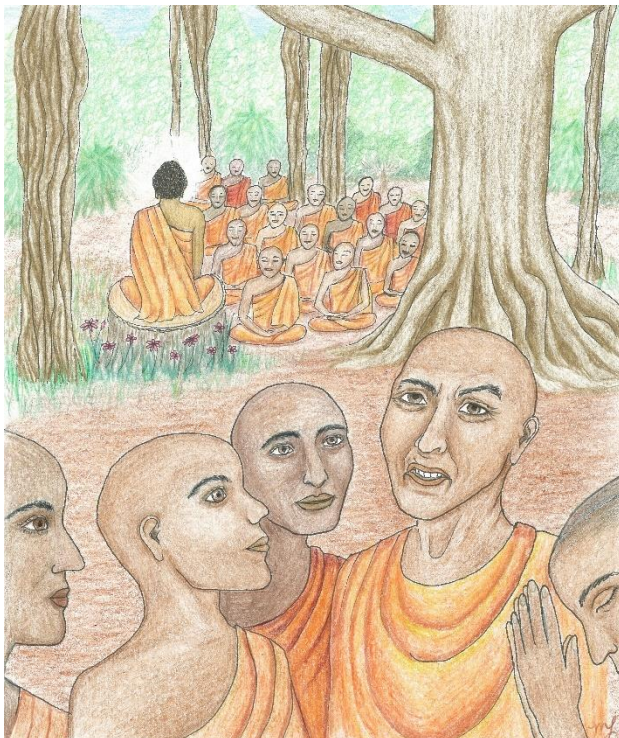
“How can the monks, sons of the Sakyans, go and eat together among families, informing them beforehand of whatever they want? Everyone enjoys nice things; these monks are no different from ordinary people.”

The other Buddhist monks also were annoyed by the behavior of Devadatta and they told the Buddha about it.

The Buddha then asked Devadatta whether it was true that he was going in large groups to eat at families’ houses after telling them what they wanted the family to offer them.

Devadatta replied, “It is true, Lord.”

The Buddha told him it was wrong to do that, and then gave a talk on the Dharma. He made a rule that the monks should go in groups of not more than three to a family’s home. That would be more compassionate to families, who then wouldn’t have to prepare food for so many people. Also, it would avoid causing conflict among the monks.



Devadatta later met with some monks who were his friends. Referring to the Buddha disrespectfully as “the monk Gautama,” Devadatta said to them,

“Let’s create a disagreement and conflict in the monk Gautama’s Sangha,” the community of monks.

A monk named Kokālika replied, “The monk Gautama is mighty and powerful, friend. How can we do that?”

Devadatta replied, “Let’s go to the monk Gautama and demand five new rules that would make a monk have fewer attachments and more self-discipline. The monk Gautama will never grant such a request. We can tell people that he refused to grant this request,

and, because people admire self-discipline, that will create a disagreement and conflict among the monk Gautama's Sangha.

Devadatta wanted people to think he was more self-disciplined—and therefore better—than the Buddha.

So, Devadatta went with his friends, who were also his followers, to visit the Buddha and said to him,

“Lord, you say it is good to have few wishes, to be content, to be dedicated to self-control, and to get rid of attachments. Here are five rules that will lead to these things: (1) monks must live in the forest their whole life, not in villages;

(2) they must only beg for food, not receive food by invitation;

(3) they must wear only rags for robes, and not accept robes given by people;

(4) they must only live under trees, not in a building; and

(5) they must not eat any fish or meat.

If a monk violates any rule, he gets punished. I propose you accept these rules.”

The Buddha said, “Let him who wishes to live in the forest and him who wishes to live in a village do so; let him who wishes to eat begged-for food and him who wishes to accept invitations do so; let him who wishes to wear rags and him who wishes to wear robes from householders do so; and let him who wishes to live at the root of a tree do so for eight months of the year but not during the rainy season. I have allowed fish and meat to be eaten if it is not seen or heard or suspected to have been killed for the monk personally.”

Devadatta was happy that his plan worked, saying, “The Buddha does not grant these five rules.”

He and his followers bowed to the Buddha and left. Devadatta went to the town of Rajagaha, and told the people about the five rules that he proposed and the Buddha refused to accept, and told them that he and his followers choose to live according to the five rules.

The unwise people were persuaded by Devadatta, thinking, “These monks are really self-controlled, but the monk Gautama lives in luxury, thinking of luxury.”

The wise people were annoyed hearing Devadatta, and said, “How can Devadatta try to create disagreement and conflict in the Sangha?”

Some monks heard about what Devadatta said to the people and reported it to the Buddha, who then asked him,

“Devadatta, is it true that are you trying to create a disagreement and conflict in the Sangha?” Devadatta, knowing the Buddha could read his mind, admitted, “It is true, Lord.”

The Buddha told him, “Don’t create a disagreement and a conflict in the Sangha. He who breaks the Sangha’s harmony will experience extreme misery due to karma, cause and effect. But he who reunites the Sangha, who brings peace to the community of monks that is in conflict, will experience great merit and enjoy the next life in a heaven-world. Do not try to create a conflict in the Sangha; it is a very serious thing.”

The next morning, when Venerable Ananda went out to receive food in the town, Devadatta saw him and said, “Friend Ananda, from today I will carry on with my monks apart from the Buddha and his monks.”

Devadatta then met with many monks and had them vote on whether they would follow his five extra rules that the Buddha refused to accept. Five hundred new monks who had not yet learned much from the Buddha voted in favor of Devadatta’s rules. So, Devadatta took these five hundred monks with him to another town.

Venerable Sariputta and Venerable Moggallana told the Buddha about what Devadatta had done. The Buddha responded,

“Don’t you feel compassion for those new monks, Sariputta? Go to them before they come to ruin.”

Venerable Sariputta and Venerable Moggallana traveled to where Devadatta was teaching a large crowd of monks.

Seeing the two highly respected senior monks approaching, Devadatta proudly announced, “See, monks, I am teaching the Dharma well. Even the chief disciples of the monk Gautama, Sariputta and Moggallana, come to me and come over to my teaching.”

Kokālika warned, “Friend Devadatta, do not trust them. There’s something evil about it.”

Devadatta was delighted with the thought that the Buddha’s greatest monks wanted to hear him teach, and said, “No, friend, they are welcome since they have come to follow my teaching.”

Devadatta offered half of his large seat to Venerable Sariputta so they could sit together, but Sariputta and Moggallana sat in another place.

After he taught for most of the evening, Devadatta turned to Venerable Sariputta and said, very much like the Buddha would say, “Friend Sariputta, the monks are not yet tired or drowsy. Perhaps you would like to give a talk on the Dharma. My back is hurting me, so I will rest it.” Venerable Sariputta accepted his invitation to teach. Devadatta then lay down on his right side in the same posture that the Buddha usually lays down, and he fell asleep.

Venerable Sariputta taught Dharma to the crowd, advising them on topics they wished to hear by reading their minds with his supernatural powers. Then Venerable Moggallana advised the crowd with the Dharma also using his supernatural powers, until people in the crowd deeply understood the Dharma, and had a pure vision of how everything in the world arises and disappears.

Then Venerable Sariputta said, “Monks, we are going back to the Buddha. Whoever believes in the Buddha’s Dharma, come with us.”

Then Venerable Sariputta and Venerable Moggallana, along with the five hundred monks, started walking to Bamboo Grove, where the Buddha was staying.

Kokālika woke Devadatta, saying, “Friend Devadatta, get up! The monks have been led away by Sariputta and Moggallana! Didn’t I tell you not to trust them, because they have evil intent?”

Devadatta was so angry and jealous that he felt like hot blood was gushing from his mouth.

When Venerable Sariputta and Venerable Moggallana arrived back at the Buddha’s monastery, they reported to the Buddha what happened. The Buddha told them and the other monks that Devadatta will die a miserable death because he tried to imitate the Buddha. He said that Devadatta’s mind is obsessed with eight things: getting things he wants and not getting them, being famous and not being famous enough, being honored and not being honored, evil wishes and evil friends. As a result of those obsessions, he will suffer in the future. So, the Buddha advised the monks to constantly try to overcome those eight things. He told the monks that Devadatta fell into negativity by his evil wishes, evil friends, and stopping his spiritual efforts once he got supernatural powers.

Questions:

1. What did Devadatta want people to think about him when he asked the Buddha to accept the five new rules? (he wanted people to think he was better than the Buddha)
2. What kind of trouble did Devadatta want to cause by asking the Buddha to accept the five new rules? (he wanted to create a disagreement and conflict in the Buddha’s community of monks)
3. Did the Buddha agree to those five new rules? (no)
4. Which monks voted in favor of Devadatta’s five rules and decided to follow him? (500 new monks who had not yet learned much from the Buddha)
5. Why did Venerable Sariputta and Venerable Moggallana visit Devadatta? (to bring the monks back to the Buddha)

6. What eight things did the Buddha say that Devadatta was obsessed with? (getting things he wants and not getting them, being famous and not being famous enough, being honored and not being honored, evil wishes, and evil friends)

What the Buddha said:

“Jayam veram pasavati, dukkham seti parājito, upasanto sukham seti, hitvā jayaparājayaṃ.”

“Victory causes enemies; the defeated live in pain. Happily the peaceful ones live, rejecting both victory and defeat.”

Dhammapada 201 (15:5)

Dharma Discussion - Conflict:

Devadatta intensely wanted fame, popularity and admiration, so much that even though he was a monk, he was willing to do terrible things to get it.

He was so greedy for power-- “power hungry.” Have you heard that term before?

And Devadatta was charming enough—he had enough charisma—that he was able to persuade people to follow him.

He knew that he could gain power over people by stirring up trouble—causing others to complain, have disagreements, argue and have conflicts.

The Buddha knew that when people have big disagreements and conflicts, they are distracted, upset, and unable to focus on work, studies and meditation.

They waste a lot of time and energy arguing and making strategies against opponents.

So, the Buddha made efforts to protect the community of monks from Devadatta or anyone else trying to stir up disagreements and conflicts.

In all kinds of situations, when someone wants to win against a rival or wants to control others, they might use the strategy of stirring up disagreements and conflicts—the “divide and conquer” strategy.

Have you ever seen someone cause a conflict between friends?

They may do that to make a friend join them and leave the other friend.

Some people like to cause arguments and disagreements because they don’t like to see others being happy and peaceful.

And some are just bored and enjoy arguing or seeing others argue and fight.

How do people start the conflict? What do they do to get people angry?

They may complain or say bad things about a person, or insult, ridicule, reject or bully them, spread rumors, or influence or control others by peer pressure.

Although in general, voting is good, Devadatta made the monks vote on his rules as a type of peer pressure.

These are all examples of people creating conflict for selfish reasons.

How can we avoid getting caught up in unnecessary conflicts, such as when someone is trying to influence us or pressure us to agree with something?

We should try to be aware of that person's character by observing their behavior.

Are they often helpful to other people, or only to certain friends? Are they a loyal friend or do they sometimes seem not to care? Are they genuinely kind and caring, or do they seem selfish? Do they make you feel uncomfortable?

If you don't feel you can really trust them, it's probably better to avoid them or avoid agreeing with them when they're trying to influence or pressure you.

If the 500 new monks had been more aware of Devadatta's unkind and selfish character, they could have avoided getting involved in his scheme.

Are there ever good reasons for argument or conflict? Yes! Can you think of any?

Argument, when it's respectful, is an appropriate way to solve a disagreement.

Also, it's important to speak up if you or someone else is being harmed or may be harmed—*actually* harmed, not just when you are disappointed over something unimportant, like getting another piece of candy.

When someone is doing something harmful to another, we may need to stand up for what's right by questioning them or pointing out what they are doing wrong.

How might they respond if we do that?

They may argue, shout, be angry and start a big conflict.

But if out of kindness we're protecting someone from harm, it's a good karma.

We also can make good karma by being a peace-maker—helping people who are in a conflict to find a peaceful solution.

Have you ever helped others solve their conflict? How did you do it?

You might start by helping them feel calm and comfortable, and then listening carefully to the person or people on each side of the conflict tell their point of view—their side of the story—one side first, and then the other side.

You can ask them questions so you fully understand their side of the story.

Next, you can see if there are some facts they can agree on, and you can help clarify the exact points of disagreement.

Then, maybe you can try to help them agree on any of those points, which might lead to a solution. For example, one side might agree the other side was correct.

Or, have each side suggest possible solutions to their conflict and help them agree on a solution that both sides feel is acceptable, even if it's a compromise, or not exactly what one or the other side wants.

Or you can suggest someone else who can help them, such as a school counselor.

This process is called mediation. Maybe you can try being a mediator if your friends or siblings have a conflict!

Activity - Mock mediation:

Two students choose a topic for dispute, and then choose which position to argue: one argues in favor of making a change and the other argues against making a change (or in favor of a different change). Each presents their position in the dispute, with detailed arguments and facts to support their position. A third student acts as a mediator to help the two find a solution they can agree on.

Here are some sample disputes:

1. Lunch time should be longer at school.
2. School should start and end later (or earlier) in the day.
3. There should (or should not) be a required one-hour time period during the school day for students to do homework with a teacher available for guidance.
4. We should have a class for environmental studies at school.
5. We should (or should not) have physical education as a required class in school.
6. We should (or should not) have art (or music) as a required class in school.

Here is a general framework for a mediation:

1. The person arguing to make a change explains their point of view, why they want the change, their concerns, and any facts (or pretend facts) to support it.
Next, the person who is arguing against that change explains their point of view—why they don't want the change, or why they want a different change—and their concerns, and facts (or pretend facts) to support it.
The mediator listens carefully and can ask them questions for them to answer so everyone can fully understand their views.
2. Next, the mediator thinks about whether there are any facts they all can agree on, and if so, asks whether they will agree to those facts.
3. The mediator states the facts on which they still disagree, and summarizes each side's concerns and arguments, to clarify and summarize the dispute.
4. The mediator asks each side whether they have any possible solutions that might also satisfy the other side's concerns, perhaps with some compromises. The mediator helps them agree on a solution that both sides feel is acceptable, even if it's a compromise, or not exactly what one or the other side wants.

Chapter 32 – The Buddha Passes Away

When the Buddha was eighty years old, during the rainy season, he got very sick, with extremely severe pain. He was so ill that he could have died, which, for a buddha, means that he would pass into final nirvana, the ultimate peace, never to be reborn. He remained mindful and fully aware, without complaining about the pain. He thought,

“It is not right for me to pass away into nirvana without telling my attendants and the Sangha of monks.”

So, he made the illness disappear and he recovered. Venerable Ananda—his main assistant, his attendant, the monk who was usually close by his side in his later years—was very relieved to see that he looked healthier. He said,

“I’m used to seeing you comfortable and healthy, Lord. When you were sick, I felt tense, I couldn’t see straight, my thoughts were all unclear. But I knew that you would not pass away into nirvana without an announcement to the monks.”

The Buddha replied, “Ananda, what does the Sangha expect from me? The Dharma I have taught has no secret and public versions; I haven’t kept anything secret. Now I am old, Ananda, I am eighty years old. Just as an old cart is made to continue on by patching it up, so too it seems to me that my body is made to continue on with the need to patch it up. It is only comfortable by not paying attention to the symptoms and by stopping the feeling in the body. So, Ananda, each of you should make the Dharma your only refuge, by being mindful, fully aware, and getting rid of craving for things in the world.”

One morning, the Buddha asked Venerable Ananda bring his mat and come with him. When they sat down, the Buddha said,

“When anyone has developed, established, and properly carried out the four bases of success, he could, if he wished, live out the age or what remains of the age. Ananda, I have done all that; I could, if I wished, live out the age or what remains of the age.”

This was a hint to Venerable Ananda to ask the Buddha to live much longer, but Venerable Ananda didn’t understand it and didn’t get the hint. His mind was distracted and confused by Mara, the evil spirit. The Buddha repeated his hint two times, but Venerable Ananda still didn’t get it. The Buddha said,

“You may go, Ananda, now it is time to do as you like.”

Ananda bowed and went away to sit at the root of a nearby tree.

Meanwhile, Mara the evil spirit came to the Buddha and said, “Attain final nirvana now. Now is the time for you to attain final nirvana. You once said, ‘I will not attain nirvana, Evil One, until

the monks, nuns, and men and women followers are wise, disciplined, perfectly confident, and educated to learn the Dharma properly, practice the Dharma the true way, and teach and explain the Dharma.’ But now all that has been accomplished. Also, you said, ‘I will not attain final nirvana, Evil One, until this holy life has become successful, widespread, and shared among many, until people make it a good example to others.’ But now all that has been accomplished. So, attain final nirvana now.”

He hoped the Buddha would have less influence over people if he passed into final nirvana.

The Buddha said, “You may rest, Evil One. Soon my attainment of final nirvana will take place. Three months from now I will attain final nirvana.”

With those words, the Buddha gave up his will to live and revealed that his body would die and he would attain final nirvana, the ultimate goal. Just then, a huge, frightening earthquake occurred.

Venerable Ananda asked the Buddha why there was such a big earthquake. The Buddha explained that there are several reasons. One is the natural cause, when great forces make water quake which makes the earth quake. Another is when a powerful being in a heaven-world, or a monk or holy man with supernatural powers makes the earth quake. Other great earthquakes occur at very special moments in a Buddha’s life, such as his birth, full enlightenment, first teaching of the Dharma, giving up the will to live, and passing into final nirvana.

Then he said, “And now, Ananda, this very day I have given up my will to live.”

Ananda pleaded, “Lord, live out the age, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare and happiness of the beings of the heaven-worlds and humans.”

The Buddha said, “No, Ananda, don’t ask me that now. The time to ask that has now passed.”

Venerable Ananda asked two more times, and on the third request, the Buddha asked why he asked for a third time. Venerable Ananda repeated what the Buddha had said earlier about living longer. The Buddha told him that if he had begged him to live out the age when he gave him the big hint, he would have agreed to live longer. So, he said that Venerable Ananda was at fault for failing, when given such a big hint, to ask him to live longer. Venerable Ananda, who had an amazing ability to focus on and remember all the Buddha’s teachings, had let his mind be distracted when something so important was being told to him.

The Buddha said, “Haven’t I already told you, Ananda, that there is separation from all that is dear, all that is loved? How can it be that something that is born, that has come into existence, doesn’t die? That’s not possible. Something has been given up by me: my will to live. I have said that three months from now I will attain final nirvana. It’s impossible for me to go back on those words.”

He had told Mara that he would pass into final nirvana in three months. He requested Venerable Ananda to call all of the monks in the monastery. When they were gathered together, the Buddha told them,

“Monks, I have now taught you the things which I know directly. These things you should thoroughly learn, develop and constantly practice so this holy life (the Sangha of Buddhist monks) will last long, and, with compassion for the world, for the welfare and happiness of many people and heavenly beings. Monks, all things must pass away. Attain perfection through diligence. Soon I will attain final nirvana. I am old and little life remains in me; I will soon leave you. Be diligent and mindful, be virtuous, monks. With thoughts well concentrated keep watch over your hearts. Whoever lives diligently this Dharma will leave the cycle of rebirths and all suffering will come to an end.”

The Buddha traveled around with large groups of monks to many different towns to teach for the last time. In one town lived Cunda, the son of a goldsmith, who offered the Buddha and his monks a mango tree grove to camp in, and a meal. Cunda had various foods prepared at his house for the offering, including pig’s mincemeat, which is either pork or a type of mushroom that pigs eat. When Cunda went to the Buddha to invite him and the monks for the meal, the Buddha said:

“Serve the pig’s mincemeat you have prepared to me, Cunda. But serve any other food you have prepared to the Sangha of monks.”

Later, after the meal was served, the Buddha told him, “Cunda, if any pig’s mincemeat is left over, bury it in a hole. I don’t see anyone other than me who could digest it if he ate it.”

After eating his meal and giving Cunda a talk on the Dharma, the Buddha was attacked by a severe illness with bleeding and extreme pain, caused by eating the pig’s mincemeat. He endured the pain mindfully, without complaining.

He then went with Venerable Ananda toward the small town of Kusinara. On the way, the Buddha told him that late that night, between two sala trees near Kusinara, he will attain final nirvana. Concerned that someone may blame Cunda for his death after eating Cunda’s food, the Buddha told Ananda to tell Cunda that it was a great merit for him that the Buddha attained nirvana after getting the last meal from him, and therefore that Cunda will have a long life, good position, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heaven-world.

When they arrived near Kusinara, the Buddha said, “Ananda, please make a couch ready for me with its head toward the north between these two sala trees. I am tired and will lie down.”

After Venerable Ananda prepared the couch, the Buddha mindfully lay down on his right side with his head propped up by his right hand, and one foot on top of the other. The trees, which normally would not be in bloom at that time, were full of blossoms, sprinkling petals down onto the Buddha’s body.

The Buddha said, “Ananda, the two sala trees are covered with blossoms although it is not in season. They sprinkle them on my body out of devotion. But this is not how a Buddha is honored, revered or respected. Rather, it is the monk or nun, or man or woman follower who lives according to the Dharma, practices the Dharma, that honors, reveres or respects a Buddha with the highest devotion of all. Therefore, Ananda, practice this way: ‘We will live according to the Dharma, practicing the Dharma.’”

Venerable Ananda asked and the Buddha answered several questions. Then Venerable Ananda, who had not yet completed the goal of becoming an arahant, walked away. He went inside a building, stood leaning against the door frame and wept, saying, “I am still only a learner whose work is not yet completed. My teacher is about to attain final nirvana—my teacher who has compassion for me!”

The Buddha asked the monks, “Where is Ananda?”

The monks told him where he was and what he had said. The Buddha told a monk to bring Ananda, and said to him,

“Ananda, don’t be sad. Haven’t I already told you that there is separation from all that is dear and all that you love? How can it be that something that is born, that has come into existence, should not die? That is not possible. Ananda, you have over a long time constantly attended to my needs with acts of loving-kindness—helpfully, gladly, sincerely and without hesitation. You have made merit, Ananda. Keep on making effort and you will soon be free from all impurities.” That meant that soon Venerable Ananda would become an arahant.

Then he said, “Monks, the buddhas of the past also had attendants like Ananda, and those in the future will have attendants like him, too. Ananda is wise, monks. He knows when is the time for monks to come and see me, and when is the time for nuns to see me, and for male followers to see me, for women followers to see me, and for kings and ministers to see me. When any groups of monks, nuns, men or women come to see Ananda, they are glad to hear him speak, and disappointed when he is silent again.”

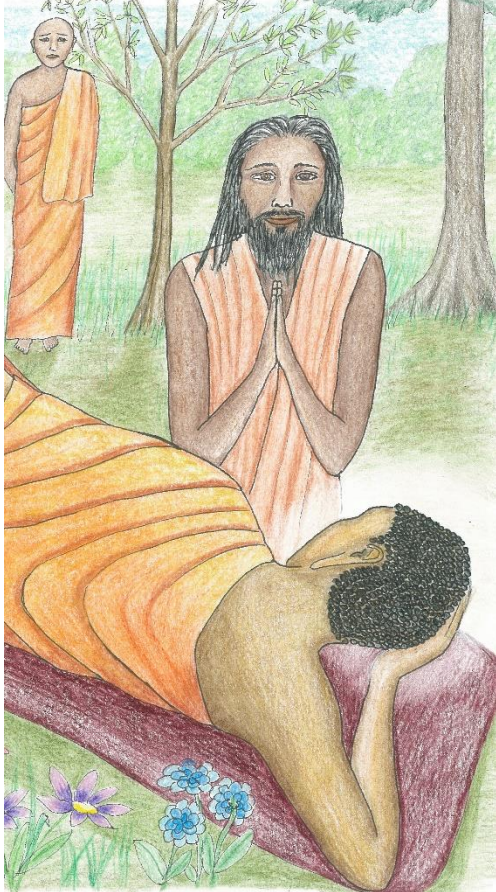
After those kind words of praise for Venerable Ananda, the Buddha told him to go into town and announce that the Buddha will pass into final nirvana that night. When the announcement was made, the people of the town were overcome with grief, and went immediately to visit the Buddha.

A wandering ascetic named Subhadda heard that the Buddha would attain final nirvana that night. He had heard that there were fully enlightened people in the world occasionally, and wondered whether the Buddha was one of them.

He wanted to hear the Buddha teach so he could be sure the Buddha was fully enlightened. He approached Venerable Ananda and asked to see the Buddha.

Venerable Ananda replied, “Friend Subhadda, don’t trouble the Buddha. He is tired.”

The Buddha overheard their conversation and told Ananda not to keep him out, to let him come. Even in his last moments, the Buddha wanted to help others.



Subaddha approached the Buddha and asked a question. The Buddha’s answer made Subaddha’s doubts disappear. He then took refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and requested to be ordained as a monk. The Buddha told Venerable Ananda to ordain him into the Sangha. Subaddha later became an arahant.

The Buddha asked the monks whether they had any questions. None of them had any. The Buddha last words were:

“Indeed, monks, I say this to you: it is the nature of all things to dissolve. Attain perfection by diligence.”

He went into meditation, deeper and deeper, and then a great earthquake occurred, signaling the moment that he attained final nirvana, the ultimate, endless peace and happiness that is so profound it cannot be described in words.

Questions:

1. Why did the Buddha make his earlier illness disappear? (he didn’t want to pass away without first telling the monks)
2. Why didn’t Venerable Ananda ask the Buddha to live longer when the Buddha first hinted to him? (his mind was confused and distracted)
3. To whom did the Buddha first say that he would pass into final nirvana in three months? (Mara)
4. Did Cunda create good karma or bad karma for giving the Buddha food that made him sick? (good karma)

5. What is the best way to honor the Buddha, by offering flowers? (no, by living according to the Dharma, practicing the Dharma)

6. Why did the Buddha allow Subaddha to see him even in the last moments of life? (even in his last moments he wanted to help others)

What the Buddha said:

“Uttitṭhe nappamajjeyya, dhammaṃ sucariṭaṃ care, dhammacāri sukhaṃ seti,
asmiṃ loka paramhi ca.”

“Wake up! Be diligent! Lead a righteous life. He who lives practicing the Dharma lives happily both in this world and the next.”

Dhammapada 168 (13:2)

Dharma Discussion – Living the Dharma:

The Buddha lived his life constantly helping others, because of his great compassion for their suffering.

He traveled all over—by walking—to different towns and villages, even when he was ill, so he could teach the Dharma to as many people as possible who were ready to learn it.

When he was extremely ill, about to die, what did he do to help Venerable Ananda, Cunda and Subaddha? He showed great compassion for them by speaking kind words that would help them.

And he instructed everyone—not just monks but everyone—to live according to the Dharma, practicing the Dharma, and to be diligent in learning and practicing the Dharma. This was so important that they were his last words.

Yet, many people in modern times feel that religion is unimportant, because their life seems good enough and they don't believe religion will really improve it.

But is it good enough?

Every day, we're always doing what we have to do to avoid problems and things that would be unpleasant or make us feel uncomfortable or stressed.

And we worry about protecting or losing things.

Every day we experience not getting what we want, things not going our way.

What do people usually feel when they don't get what they want, or when they get what they have been trying to avoid, such as being rejected by a friend?

They feel disappointed, agitated, extremely upset or even depressed.

Isn't this just the way life is? Yes. We're used to this; it's normal.

We might not notice every time we're agitated, frustrated, disappointed or worried, because we experience it so often in everyday life.

But, what happens over time, over several years, if we often feel this way?

It can lead to ongoing stress, depression, anxiety and illness.

We don't have to be so stressed.

The Buddha's teachings can make us much happier and more peaceful.

How do we know this? We can see this in people who are dedicated to the Dharma, who practice it sincerely, diligently—we see that they are more confident and calm even when they experience difficulties, compared to those who don't practice the Dharma.

What does it mean to be diligent? To make ongoing efforts—to keep trying—to do something with interest and attention.

How do we live according to the Dharma, practicing the Dharma with diligence?

And why should we think about doing that when we are young?

Because we form our character, and our good habits and bad habits, when we are kids, and bad habits are very difficult to change when we're older.

But we are so busy! When our mind is filled with so many things we have to do.

we don't often think of the Dharma

Many of us don't have time to sit and meditate or read Dharma books.

Venerable Ananda also was very busy attending to the Buddha, and he didn't have much time to meditate.

He was so busy doing things such as giving messages to and from the Buddha, advising and dealing with the many people who wanted to visit the Buddha, doing errands, bringing water to the Buddha, and cleaning his apartment.

But he practiced the Dharma with diligence by doing whatever he could to be helpful to others wherever he was.

When he cried about the passing away of the Buddha, he had doubts about whether he was practicing the Dharma enough, because he wasn't like the other monks who spent a lot of time meditating and who had become arahants.

But the Buddha assured him and gave him confidence that he was practicing the Dharma by the everyday things he was doing, including being helpful to others.

And he later did become an arahant.

We too can practice the Dharma by the everyday things we do, whether in school, at home, with friends, or alone.

One way to do this is by remembering the Noble Eightfold Path, or at least some parts of it, and applying it to our daily life by asking ourselves some questions.

For example, for Right View, we can remember the Four Noble Truths, or at least the first one—that life is full of suffering.

We can ask ourselves, did I see someone suffering today? And did I feel compassion for the person who was suffering?

Maybe we saw someone who is ill, a brother or sister who was upset, someone struggling to do their classwork, or someone being teased or bullied.

For Right Intention, we can ask ourselves, did I have the right intention when helping someone—did I do it with lovingkindness or compassion, because I really care about the person I’m helping, or because I felt that I was supposed to do it?

For Right Speech, we can ask ourselves, did I speak any kind words to someone today? Did I speak any angry words today? Did I say anything dishonest today?

For Right Action, we can ask ourselves, did I do anything that may have hurt or harmed any person or other living creature today? Did I take anything that wasn’t mine?

For Right Livelihood, we can ask ourselves, did I do all my schoolwork and/or homework well today?

For Right Effort, we can ask ourselves, did I make efforts to say prayers, meditate, or help others? Was I tempted to be lazy, to watch too much television, computer games, or videogames?

For Right Mindfulness, we can ask ourselves, did I take a moment of mindfulness today? We can take a moment of mindfulness by closing our eyes for a moment, and just being aware of everything that we hear and everything that we feel in or on our body. For example, we feel our eyelids on our eyes, our tongue against our teeth, our shirt on our shoulders and back, our belly moving as we breathe, our toes touching each other. This moment of mindfulness can help us feel calm and centered.

For Right Concentration, we can ask ourselves, did I practice a moment of meditative concentration today? We can do that by focusing on one object. We can look carefully at one small simple object—for example, a pebble or a candle flame—keeping our mind focused on it, memorizing its colors, shape, size, and other features; then, we close our eyes and try to visualize it. Or, we can close our eyes and focus on our breath, by taking three long, deep breaths, and just keep our mind focused on our breathing. This also can help us feel relaxed and learn to practice meditation on breathing.

By asking ourselves these questions, and doing these moments of meditation, we become aware of how we are practicing the Dharma every day, even when we are very busy!

Activity - Noble Eightfold Path Checklist:

List on a sheet of paper the eight parts of the Noble Eightfold Path. Next to each of the eight parts, write at least one question, such as the Eight-Fold Path questions above. At the end of the day, ask yourself the questions on your list to see how you practiced the Dharma that day.

*I have gained an abundant flood of merit,
thus honoring the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha
most worthy of respect.
By the spiritual power of that merit, may our
obstacles be destroyed.*