

Lesson 22 – PEACE – 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

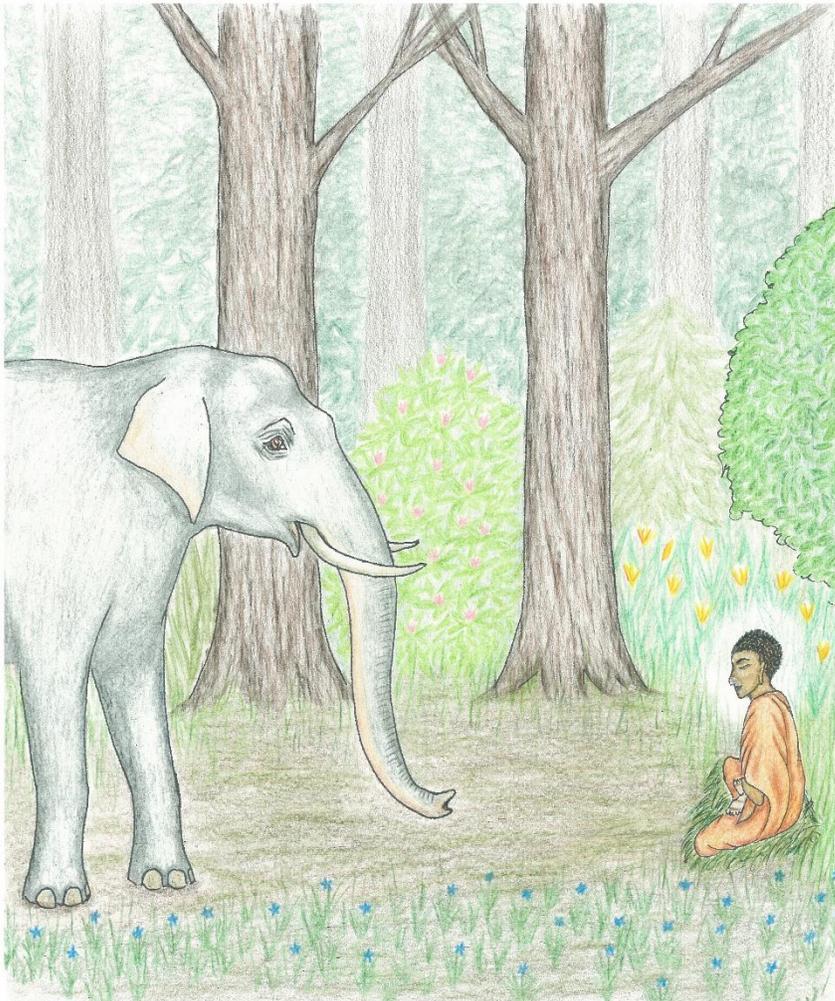
does it, and they all happily do their daily work to help and support each other - they never had any quarrels or resentment.

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 to do, 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 the 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.