

Lesson 13 – JEALOUSY - 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.

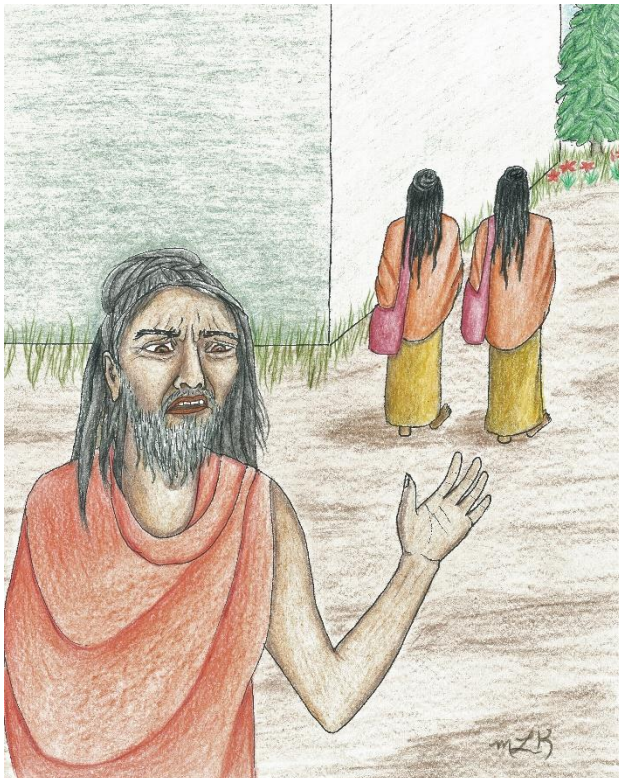
Hearing that short statement of the Buddha’s teachings, Moggallana then also had a pure vision of the Dharma, deeply understanding the arising of things and the ending of things. Like Sariputta, he attained the first level of enlightenment.

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.