

ARGUMENT ABOUT THE MOON (Māluta Jataka)

At the base of a big mountain, there was a cave in which lived a young tiger and a young lion. They had grown up near each other and were close friends ever since they were tiny cubs.

And all that time, they never knew that lions and tigers are usually enemies because they compete with each other in hunting animals for food.



But early one morning, they got into an argument. This is how it happened.

They were walking around in the forest very early in the morning, before the sunrise. There was a breeze, and the tiger noticed that the weather was getting colder.

The tiger said,

“The weather is getting colder. So that means that the moon must be getting smaller each day. In a few days we won’t see it anymore.”



They looked up at the moon. It was a half moon, so they could see only half of the moon, shining like a half of a pie, or half of a cookie, way out in space.



The lion looked at him with a puzzled expression, and said, “Colder weather means the moon is getting bigger. In a few days there will be a full moon.”



The tiger said, “Everyone knows that it gets colder when the moon is smaller, when the nights are darker.”

The lion said impatiently, “Where did you hear that? Everyone knows it gets colder when the moon is bigger, when the moonlight shines more at night!”

Both of them thought about the different shapes of the moon, when it is full, when it is almost full, when it is a half moon, and when it is just a thin crescent moon.

The tiger felt sure that he was correct. But the lion felt quite sure that he was right and that the tiger was incorrect.

The sun rose, and the two were quiet for a while. The tiger couldn't stop thinking about the moon and insisted on correcting his friend, so he argued,

"Tonight you will see that the moon is getting smaller, and it is colder today than it was yesterday."

The lion looked annoyed, and said, "You're just cold because you couldn't find anything to eat yesterday."



The tiger didn't like that comment, so he said with a loud roaring voice, opening his mouth to show his teeth,

"It's none of your business what I eat. I'm not going to eat trash food like you eat."



The lion felt insulted, and with an angry look, opening his mouth even more, he roared, "I don't eat trash food!"

The tiger walked away, looking like he was disgusted.

The lion stood proudly in the morning sun, and shook his great mane, which made him look bigger and stronger. He said loudly to the tiger,

"It feels nice and warm today."

The tiger felt annoyed. Was the lion trying to start another argument? Or was he trying to tease him? He said nothing in return.

The lion called out, "If you're hungry, I have some food left over that you can have. Oh, never mind, you don't like my food."

The tiger was hungry, and in a bad mood. Growling, he threatened, "How about if I eat YOU?"



The lion didn't want to appear frightened, so he said, "What's the matter with you? I guess you're angry because you know you were wrong. Now you realize that the weather gets colder when the moon is getting bigger."

The tiger wanted to prove that he was right. He said in a booming loud voice, "Don't you remember how brightly the moon was shining a few days ago, when you were out hunting all night?"

The lion argued back, loudly and clearly, "I was hunting all night because I couldn't see much, it was so dark!"

The tiger insisted, with an insulting tone, “Why would you hunt when you can’t see anything? Obviously, you can’t catch anything unless it’s light enough to see something.”

The lion, showing all his teeth, snapped back, “I hunt when I’m hungry. It doesn’t matter how dark it is. I use my sense of smell and hearing to find prey.”

The tiger, showing all his teeth, roared angrily, “Well that’s a foolish waste of time! You’re a fool!”

The lion, wanting to have the last word, roared back, “And YOU are obnoxious and lazy!”

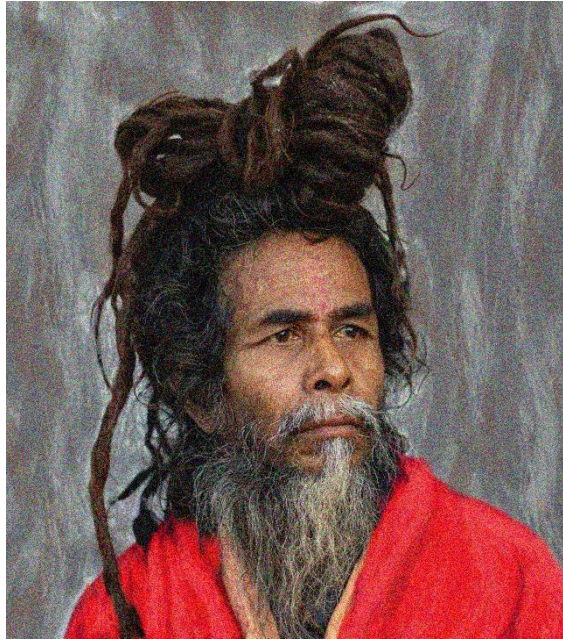


The tiger and the lion were feeling more and more angry, because they each had insulted the other.

They tried to convince themselves that they didn’t care. But their anger made them feel irritable and uncomfortable. They didn’t feel happy and relaxed anymore. They didn’t want to be enemies. They each were worried that they would lose their friendship forever.

They remembered that there was a wise yogi who lived in a nearby cave, and they decided to visit him to seek his advice. When they found him, the tiger said,

“We had a disagreement about what causes the weather to become colder. When does the weather get colder, when the moon is getting bigger or when it’s getting smaller?”



The yogi replied,

“It can be colder in any phase of the moon, when it is getting bigger or getting smaller. It’s not the moon, but the wind which brings colder weather. So, I decide that you both are right!”

He advised them,

“The most important thing is to live without fighting and angry arguments. It is much more important to live in peace and harmony than to win an argument!”

The tiger and the lion each realized how silly it was to get angry just because each wanted to prove he was right.

They thanked the yogi for his good advice, and the lion and tiger were happy to be friends again.

QUESTIONS:

1. How long had the tiger and lion been friends? (since they were tiny cubs)
2. What did the lion and tiger think was the cause of colder weather? (the size of the moon, whether it was getting bigger or smaller).

3. When the tiger said that the lion eats trash food, how did the lion feel? (insulted, upset, angry)
4. How did they show their power and anger? (showing their teeth, speaking loudly, roaring, shaking mane, threatening, insulting the other)
5. What were they worried about losing? (their friendship)
6. What did the yogi say was more important than winning an argument? (to live in peace and harmony)

DHARMA DISCUSSION – Avoiding arguments:

The lion and tiger almost lost their friendship just because they didn't agree on what causes cold weather.

They argued about something that wasn't important at all.

But they each thought they were right and the other was wrong, and neither of them wanted to back down.

Have you ever been in an argument with a friend?

How did you feel toward your friend when you were arguing?

Do you remember what you were arguing about? Was it important?

When we argue with someone, we might have an intense desire to prove that we are right and they are wrong.

We like to be correct, and we don't like to be wrong.

If the other person feels the same way, the argument can become intense and unpleasant, like the argument of the lion and tiger, with loud voices, shouting, insults, accusations, unkind words, anger, and hurt feelings.



Like the lion and tiger, we might even open our mouth wider and raise up our lips, showing our teeth when we argue!

And after we argue, we may feel upset or angry for quite some time. We also make the person we are arguing with upset or angry. And what about others who hear our loud argument? They get annoyed also!

And even if you think you won an argument, does it make you happy?
Maybe so, but that happiness doesn't last long.
But feeling upset from an argument can last a long time.
And we can lose our good friends.
So, we should try to remember, when we find ourselves in an unpleasant argument, that winning the argument is not as important as how we will feel later on. It often may cause more harm than good.

Is an arguing always a bad thing? No.
People who disagree can have an argument that is constructive.
Can you think of how an argument can be constructive, how people might behave when they want to tell their different points of view?
They are respectful and considerate, with each person speaking in turn, listening carefully to the other person when he is speaking, and trying to understand the other's point of view.
And, explaining clearly, without shouting or using insulting words.
It might be difficult to do when you feel very emotional about what you feel is right.

What can we do to avoid getting too emotional in an argument?
Do you think it would help if you say to the other person "Don't shout" or "Why are you so angry?" or "Why are you yelling at me?"
It sounds like you are accusing him, which provokes his anger more, so that's usually not a good idea.
Instead, if the other person getting too loud, keep your own voice quiet, or just listen until the person calms down.
You can say, "I understand what you are saying," so you make the other person feel respected, that you heard him or her.
You could ask questions, or try to get more information, to try to understand his point of view better.
He may know something you don't know.

If you think an argument is getting too unpleasant, too disrespectful, you can try to stop it. Can you think of ways to stop an argument?
You could do what the lion and tiger did, and ask someone else for advice.
What about changing the subject? That might help.
Or just stop it by saying "OK let's just forget it" or "Let's talk about it later," "I don't want to argue," "I understand your opinion but I don't agree," "That's your opinion, or "Let's just agree to disagree."

You can just turn away or walk away. Be like a powerful silent lion, standing tall and looking at the person directly with a calm, silent gaze, then turn away, like you don't have time to argue. That way you don't seem weak or admit you are wrong.

The next time you're in an unpleasant argument, watch out that you don't get too emotional, and think about how you can keep the argument respectful, or if that's not working, how you can stop the argument.