

*Stories from*

# **The Jataka Tales**

*With Dharma Discussions for Kids*

*By*

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*Ink and pencil illustrations by Gilmer Holton*

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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.

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 selection of Jataka Tales, stories of the Buddha's past lives, retold with rich details and simple modern language to ensure they are clearly comprehended by children. The Dharma discussion with each story is designed to help kids in understanding the emotion, virtue or non-virtue illustrated by the story and to gently guide them in applying the Dharma to their everyday life with all its challenges. The goal is to assist children in developing good character, confidence, resilience, awareness and good habits to have a firm foundation for a successful, happy and peaceful life.

The book is intended for kids to read on their own or for parents or teachers to read to them. Parents and teachers may use the Dharma discussion as a suggested outline, to be modified to suit the children's ages and backgrounds. It should invite kids to pose their own questions and concerns, and to share ideas, examples, dilemmas, and solutions from their own experiences. This helps them to fully integrate the Dharma into their daily lives. Each story is accompanied by a set of questions (with answers shown in parentheses), to aid comprehension and recollection of the story. It is suggested that teachers and parents start a storytelling session with a short prayer or Buddhist stanza, and conclude with a dedication of merit. In addition, a short guided meditation before the story helps children be more focused, calm and alert.

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 helped immeasurably in editing this book. I thank my co-teachers, Aleks Smirnov and Fawn Bui, for all their thoughtful contributions to the Dharma discussions. I specially thank Gilmer Holton for his very expressive ink and pencil illustrations. For all the photos used and modified in this book, I appreciate all the photographers, too many to name, who generously provided their work via free websites Unsplash.com and Pixnio.com. I am also very grateful to Dr. Sharmini and Don Jayamaha for generously sponsoring the printing of this book.

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## NOTES:

The stories herein were adapted from *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, ed. E.W. Cowell, tr. Robert Chalmers, Cambridge, 1895, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi and Madras, 2002.

Certain details have been modified from Professor E.W. Cowell's edition in some stories, for example those presented in Chapters 13 (The Fish and His Friend) and 15 (The Monkey Bridge), to be more suitable for children and for the Dharma teaching to be more clearly illustrated in the story.

Details in the preamble to Illisa Jataka, namely the identity of Venerable Moggallana as the miser's visitor and the Buddha's Jetavana monastery as the destination of the miraculous travel, have been modified from Professor E.W. Cowell's edition in the story as presented in Chapter 18 (The Miser and his Cake) to make the story consistent with the illustrations provided by Gilmer Holton.

## Chapter 1 - MUNIKA THE PIG (Munika Jataka)



A long time ago, a cow had two calves on a big farm. There were many other animals on the farm, including chickens, dogs, pigs, horses and goats. Many different types of vegetables were grown on the farm.

The older calf was named Big Red and his younger brother was named Little Red.

When they were very young, they enjoyed watching the farmer, his family and the other animals on the farm.



They especially liked to watch the little pig playing around the farm all by himself.

His name was Munika.

Big Red and Little Red were always together, and enjoyed many days running in the cool grass, exploring the farm, and

relaxing in the shade underneath the big trees.



But when they got older, the farmer trained Big Red and Little Red to pull a cart.

Soon, they had to work very hard every day.

They pulled a cart whenever the family wanted to travel to the town.



They pulled a heavy plough in the hot sun so the farmer could grow the vegetables.



They pulled a cart heavily loaded with vegetables to sell at the market, and then they pulled the cart, heavily loaded with all of the items the family bought, back to the farm.

At the end of the day, their muscles hurt from all the hard work they did.



But Munika! Munika never did any work!

He happily trotted around the farm, playing and rolling in the mud every day.



And, he was fed a lot of rice and tasty food, just like the food that the farmer's family ate.





He got to eat some really delicious food!



Little Red noticed this, and said to his brother, “You and I have to pull all the heavy loads for the farmer every day, and all they give us for our hard work is cheap grass and straw to eat. And look at that pig. That Munika! He is being fed all the very best and most delicious food! He gets everything he wants! He doesn’t have to work hard. Why is he being treated so much better than we are?”



Big Red said, “My dear brother, don’t be jealous of him. It’s not good for you to feel envy. It makes you feel terrible. Plus, you don’t have to be jealous of anyone. You never know what will happen to them in the future. But you will have a good future, because you are kind, caring and helpful. Do you know, the farmer’s daughter will be married soon to a young man in the nearby town? Munika the pig is being given such nice food to fatten him so he will be eaten by the guests at the wedding.”

He continued, “Just wait, soon you will see the guests coming, and you will see that pig will get pulled out of the barn by his legs, and killed, and cooked over a fire. So don’t envy poor Munika. Be content with your simple food. It will give you a long and healthy life.”

A few days later, sure enough, the guests began to arrive for the wedding. Poor Munika was killed and cooked, and his meat was made into several types of food.



Big Red said to his little brother, “Did you see what happened to Munika? I knew what would happen with Munika feasting on all that rich food. A hundred times better, or 1000 times better, is our simple food of grass and straw, because it doesn’t harm us and we can live a good and long life.”

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What did Munika get that Little Red wanted? (delicious food)
2. What was Munika allowed to do on the farm, that Little Red wished he could do? (play and not have to work hard)
3. Was Little Red feeling jealous of Munika? (yes)
4. Was Munika actually lucky by getting a lot of good food? (no)
5. What good qualities did Little Red have that will give him a good future? (he is kind, caring and helpful)
6. What Bid Red teach Little Red at the end of the story? (to be happy with what he has, with simple food of grass and straw)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION - Envy:

Little Red was jealous of Munika.

He wanted to have the tasty food and freedom that Munika had.

“Jealousy” usually means the same thing as “envy.”

What does “jealousy” or “envy” mean?

It means wishing to have something that someone else has.

Or wishing to be like someone else.

Can you think of some examples of what people have that makes others jealous?

Money, lots of free time, a new toy, new clothes.

People are often jealous of another person’s success, for example, envying someone’s popularity, success in a sport, or good grades in school.

Do you ever feel, “I wish I could be like that”?

It’s an uncomfortable feeling when we want what someone else has.

We’re comparing what we have with what someone else has,

And we feel irritable that what we have isn’t good enough.

Envy makes us not appreciate what we have; we want something else, so we feel unhappy.

We might feel unfriendly or even hostile toward a person who has something better than what we have.

Like what Big Red said in the story, “It’s not good for you to feel envy. It makes you feel terrible.”

But what if we had everything we want – would we still feel envy?

Yes! Because even if we were rich, attractive, and successful, there is always someone who has more or better than we have.

Even the richest, most popular and most successful people feel envy!

What can we do to avoid it?

First, we can learn to enjoy what we already have.

Think about the good things that we have now - the kind people we know, our nice family, our good health, a place to live.

This is called contentment.

Next, we should notice that irritable feeling that arises when someone has something that we want to have.

Then, remember what we learned from the story of Munika.

The person may be lucky to have something special now, but in the future, we may be much luckier than him or her. If we live according to Dharma, being kind, not hurting others, then we will have a good future, we will get what we need. The next time we see someone who has something that we like, remember the story of Munika! Let others enjoy what they have.

You can also try to feel happy for someone who is successful. Just like when we're glad when our best friends do really well or get something they really wanted, try to practice feeling glad in the same way when people who aren't your best friends do something well or get something nice. Trying to be glad for them is a much better feeling than that terrible feeling of jealousy!

#### ACTIVITY:

Fill in the blank from the word list below

1. \_\_\_\_\_ means being happy with what we have.
2. Wanting something that someone else has is called \_\_\_\_\_.
3. We should not \_\_\_\_\_ what we have with what others have.
4. If we follow \_\_\_\_\_ by being kind, then we will have a good future.
5. We feel \_\_\_\_\_ when we are jealous.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ means not fancy, elaborate, expensive or luxurious.

#### Word list:

COMPARE	ENVY	DHARMA
CONTENTMENT	SIMPLE	UNHAPPY

## Chapter 2 - THE TWIN PARROTS (Sattigumba Jataka)



A long time ago, in a very big forest, a mother and father parrot had two little eggs which hatched into tiny blue baby parrots.

The baby parrots were twin brothers and looked exactly alike.



At one end of the forest was a village of robbers.

These men survived by stealing things, like jewelry and money.

They stole it from people who traveled on the road near the forest and from people in other villages.



At the other end of the forest was a village of monks.

They meditated every day and were very kind, helpful, and peaceful.



One day, there was a big storm. The sky became very dark, the wind became very strong and loud, blowing all the trees and plants, and there was rain, thunder and lightning.

The wind was so strong that it bent the tree where the parrots were staying in their nest. The wind got stronger and the thunder boomed so loudly, the tree began to crack.



The little parrot brothers looked out of their nest and were terrified that the tree would break and injure them, so they each flew out of the nest.

The powerful wind blew one parrot one way and the other parrot the other way, and they couldn't see each other in the pounding rain.

They had never flown far away from their nest before, but they just kept flying, each hoping to find his brother.



One parrot flew in the direction of the robbers' village.



And the other parrot flew in the direction of the monks' village.



The first parrot landed in the robbers' village near their weapons, where a robber found him.

The robber thought, "this little parrot is beautiful, I want to keep him as a pet."

He named him Dagger because he was found near the robbers' daggers.

He dried Dagger's feathers and gave him some food, and set a little blanket in a tree by his hut to sleep on. Dagger was happy that someone cared for him and gave him food, so he stayed happily in the robbers village.

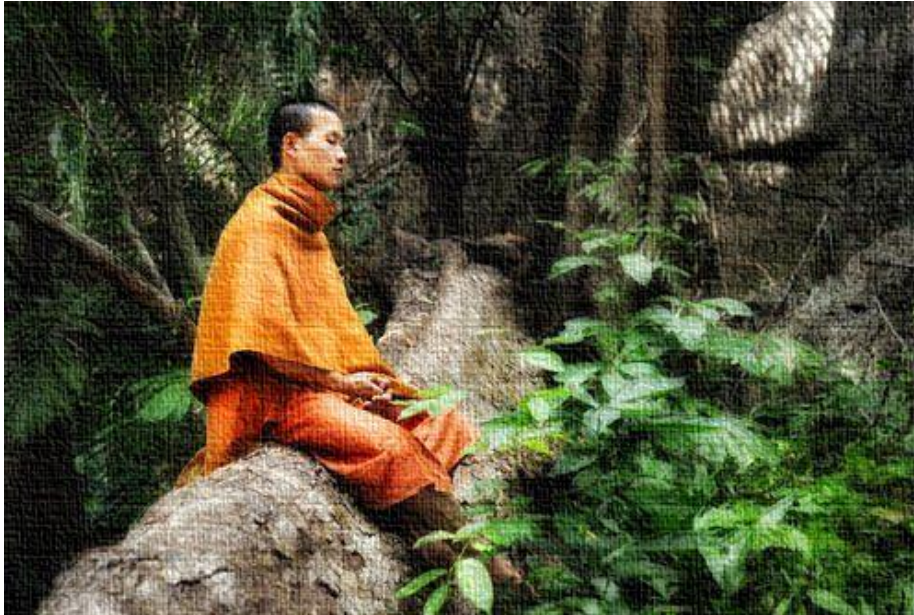
They were rowdy, and liked to play pranks and joke around, sometimes fight and have loud parties.



They thought it was fun to steal jewelry and things from wealthy people and salesmen traveling through the forest.

Dagger joined them on their adventures, and enjoyed the company of his new friends, the thieves, who always shared their food with him.

Dagger listened to them talking, and he learned to talk like they did.



The second parrot landed on a tree where a monk was meditating, just outside the monks' village, among some beautiful flowers.

The monk saw him perched near the flowers.

The parrot looked tired, wet and hungry. So the monk gave him some food and a piece of cloth to rest on.

The parrot felt safe with the monks, and stayed with them. They called him Flower, because he was found near the flowers.

He followed the monks when they went to search for food, and perched nearby while they chanted and meditated. He learned many words, and how to speak from hearing the monks talking.





One day a king went out in his chariot with his chariot driver to go deer hunting.

They went toward the forest, where he might find some deer. They got out of their chariots and made noise to make the deer run around.

When the king saw a deer, he told his driver to go full speed after the deer.



They raced through the forest, but they couldn't catch up to the deer. It ran too fast. They couldn't find the deer so they decided to turn back home.

But it would be a long journey, so they stopped near a stream to get some water. The king was tired,

so the chariot driver put a blanket for him under a tree, where the king soon fell asleep.

They were very near the robbers' village, but the robbers had gone out for a little while. There was no one in the village except for the cook and Dagger, who was on his usual perch on the tree.



Dagger saw that there was a person nearby, and flew closer. He saw the king sleeping. He thought,

“Look at all that gold jewelry. What if we kill this guy while he sleeps, and take all his jewelry.”



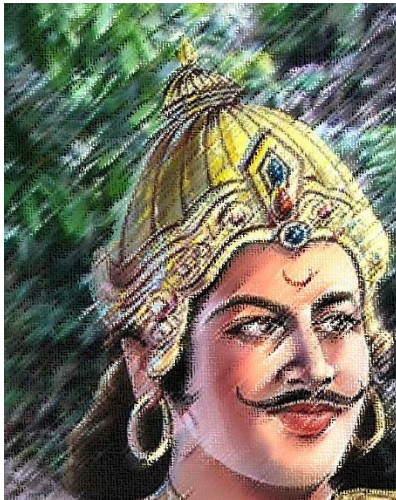
So, he flew back,  
and told the cook that they  
could rob the king while he is  
sleeping.

The cook looked where the  
king was, and said,

“That is a king! Are you  
crazy? It’s dangerous to steal  
from a king!

His men will definitely find you and punish you!”

Dagger said, “Oh don’t be so foolish. It’s easy, we kill him, take the jewelry,  
hide the body. We do it all the time.”



The king heard him talking and was scared, so he  
ran to his chariot driver and exclaimed,

“Hurry, let’s get out of here! I don’t like what that  
parrot is saying! There may be robbers around  
here!”

They jumped in the chariot and they raced  
through the forest as fast as they could.

Dagger called for his friends the robbers to come.

“Hey where are you, all my buddies? The king is getting away!

Don’t let him escape!

Get your daggers, spears, bows  
and arrows!”



The king’s chariot finally arrived at  
the other end of the forest, where  
the monks village was. But the  
monks were out searching for food  
in the forest.



Only Flower was at the monks' village, alone.

When he saw the king, he flew over to greet him.



He said, "Welcome, dear king! What good luck that you have come this way!"

He pointed with his beak toward a bowl of food, and said, "Here is the best food we have, this is for you."

Then he pointed toward a bowl of water, and said,

"Here is some cool fresh water. You must be hot and thirsty from your journey."

The king was pleased with the kind

welcome from Flower, and said,

"There is no better bird ever born than you. You are a very kind and generous bird. But the other parrot who looks just like you said many cruel words. I don't understand how he can be so different."

Flower explained, "We are brothers, dear king. We have the same mother, and came from the same nest. But my brother was raised by thieves and I was raised by monks."



Flower continued,  
“The thieves are undisciplined, selfish and unkind, tricking, hurting and cheating others. But the monks have self-control, and are generous, helpful and compassionate. You become similar to the friends that you have. Whoever you admire and get close to, you will soon become like they are. Just like if you wrap fish in leaves, the leaves soon stink, too. And if you wrap perfume in leaves, the leaves soon smell nice like perfume. A wise person stays away from bad company, knowing that trouble comes from getting near them. He instead stays near other wise people, and becomes even wiser.”

The king was so pleased with Flower’s good advice, he invited the monks to stay near his palace and gave his beautiful garden as a safe home for parrots, where he made sure that they were comfortable with all the good food they could want.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. How did the parrots become separated? (a big storm)
2. What did Dagger want to do when he saw the king? (kill him and steal his jewelry)
3. Why did Dagger want to do that? (he saw his friends rob people, and heard them talk about it)
4. How did Flower behave when the king arrived at the monks’ village? (kind, welcoming, generous)
5. Why were the parrots so different? (that each became similar to the friends they had)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION – Influence of friends:

Each of the parrots, Dagger and Flower, became similar to their friends, and very different from each other.

How did that happen?

They heard how their friends talked, and watched what their friends did.

They enjoyed joining in whatever their friends were doing.

So they began to act, talk and think just like their friends.

That is how we are *influenced* – in a good way or in a bad way - by our friends.

Dagger had the bad influences of his friends, the robbers

and Flower had the good influences of his friends, the monks.

Dagger associated with the ignorant, people who ignorant of Dharma

and Flower associated with the wise, people those who practice Dharma.

Can you think of some behaviors of other kids that might be a bad influence?

Some examples are lying, bullying, disobeying a parent or teacher, talking disrespectfully, insulting others, saying bad things about others, stealing, being revengeful, trying to prevent others from doing their work.

If you are friends with someone who often does these kinds of behaviors, then it's likely that you will join in sometimes.

You may laugh at what they do, and you may want to make them laugh by doing similar behavior. You may lie to help your friend avoid getting in trouble.

So you get involved too.

Over time, their habits become your habits.

Sometimes kids who are a bit misbehaved are the most fun to be around.

Maybe we think we can be a good influence on them - if we are friends, their behavior will get better. Is it a good idea?

Probably not, because no matter how confident we are that we can be a good example and not get involved in misbehavior, the fact is that one person's misbehavior easily spreads to others who associate with him or her.

Even adults are very often led into wrong acts, bad talk, or bad thoughts by one person's bad influence.

For young people the danger is even greater.

What if a friend only occasionally misbehaves?

In that case you can point out “that’s not nice,” avoid their behavior or somehow indicate to them that you don’t like it.

It might take courage for you to do that.

But you could be changing your life and their life for the better, so it’s well worth it.

And if they’re a good person, they’ll respect your opinion.

### Chapter 3 - NEW CLOTHES (Puppharatta Jataka)

In one of the many past lives of the Buddha, he was a spirit who observed a poor man and his wife who lived in a village in India.



The people of the village were preparing for a special festival at night called the Kattika.

They decorated the whole village with garlands of flowers and leaves, and flags.

Everything looked so colorful and cheerful. Each

house had a different special colorful decoration on the door, on the door mat, and hanging from the roof. People made colorful designs with chalk along the streets and in front of their homes.

The villagers were getting out their newest clothes to iron so they could wear it freshly pressed for the celebration. The women chose their most colorful and fancy saris, the clothes women wear in India. The wealthy men bought their wives new saris to wear for the festival. Each married man in the village looked forward to walking around that special night with his beautiful wife clinging to his arm, and each married woman looked forward to wearing her favorite sari and looking her best, so her husband would be proud to walk with her.

The poor man had only a few thick cotton homemade sarongs to wear, and every day he would wrap one around his waist to wear for the day. He sometimes put on a shawl when the weather was cool. He had washed and ironed his sarongs so many times that they had hundreds of fold-lines in them. He had no special clothes to wear for the celebration. And he had no money to buy any special clothes.

His wife knew this, but she wanted to wear something special to the festival, like the other ladies. She wanted to walk proudly in a very colorful sari, so others would see that she looks beautiful. She thought about her favorite colors, yellow and red. She knew she couldn't get a new sari, but she had an idea. She had some cloths that she could color with dye to make into a sari and shawl. They would look like brand-new clothes.

She said, "My dear, I want a yellow and red sari and shawl to wear, as I walk around at the festival with my arm around you. I can color some cloths with safflower dye to make them a beautiful red and yellow."



Her husband said, "How are poor people like us to get safflowers? Just put on a nice clean sari and we can enjoy the festival."

His wife pouted, and looked very disappointed.

She said, "If I can't have them dyed with safflowers, then I don't want to go at all."

She looked like she was going to cry. She thought about all the other ladies in the village smiling and happy with their colorful fresh saris. She thought about how embarrassed she would feel wearing one of her regular old saris; nothing special, nothing new.

She put her hands over her face and with her voice full of misery she said, "Why don't you just get some other woman to go to the festival with you."

Her husband replied, "Why are you tormenting me like that? How in the world am I going to get you safflowers?"





The wife cried out, “Where there’s a will there’s a way! Aren’t there safflowers growing in the king’s garden?”

The husband was shocked. She was suggesting that he go and steal from the king’s garden!

He said, “Look, dear. There are guards protecting the garden. Going into the king’s garden is like ... is like ... going into a pool haunted by an ogre! You can’t just go in there, with the big fence around it and those strong guards watching. They’ll kill you in a moment if you try to climb the fence and walk into the king’s garden. Give up this desire of

yours for a fancy safflower-colored sari. Just be content with what you have.”

His wife replied, “But when it’s night-time and dark, they can’t see you. What could stop you from going in at night and doing what you want when no one can see?”

The husband said, “Don’t you think the guards know that people would only try to sneak in at night? They can see by the light of the moon, and they can hear sounds.”

The wife didn’t want to hear that. She insisted, “Oh come on, you can just quickly jump the fence and they can’t hear footsteps in the grass.”

The husband explained, “It’s not easy to climb that tall fence. I would have to break it. Then surely the guards would hear it and kill me on the spot, or haul me away to be killed.”

The wife cried, “Oh you’re just afraid! There are only a few guards and they’re not going to see you at night! And what’s the problem with taking just a few flowers? It’s not that serious!”

The husband said sternly, “It’s stealing. I don’t steal. I’ve always been an honest man.”



His wife was miserable. She imagined she would be the only woman without a nice colorful sari. She would be the ugliest of them all, with a plain old sari that she wears all the time to work in the field. Everyone would look at her like she is poor and her husband doesn’t give her nice things. She would feel so unimportant, so plain and dull, so uncared for. How could she be content with what she has? All she wanted was a few flowers to color a sari. What was so wrong with wanting that?

With tears in her eyes, she said softly, “Just a few flowers. That’s all I want. Can’t you just for once do something special for me? Don’t you want me to look nice at the festival?”

Her husband just looked down at the ground, while she continued, “Don’t you want to walk proudly with me, with my arm around you, like all the other men are walking with their wives?”

The husband tried not to give in to her pleading. Still looking at the ground, he said, “Darling, no. It’s not right to break in and steal. It’s not good to take something that is not given to you.”

She pleaded, “Don’t you want people to see that you care about me? Don’t you love me?”

He looked up at her for a moment. He said weakly, “If that’s what you want, then I must get it for you.”

They went to bed, and after laying in the dark for a while, he got up. He grabbed his axe just in case he might need it, and left the house. He walked alone in the dark, thinking of how he would just quickly get through the fence, grab some safflowers, get back home, and get back to bed and sleep.

He walked until he saw the corner of the king's garden. He looked at the high fence. He couldn't possibly jump over it. There was only one way to get in. He would have to break a couple of boards in the fence to make a hole, and climb through.



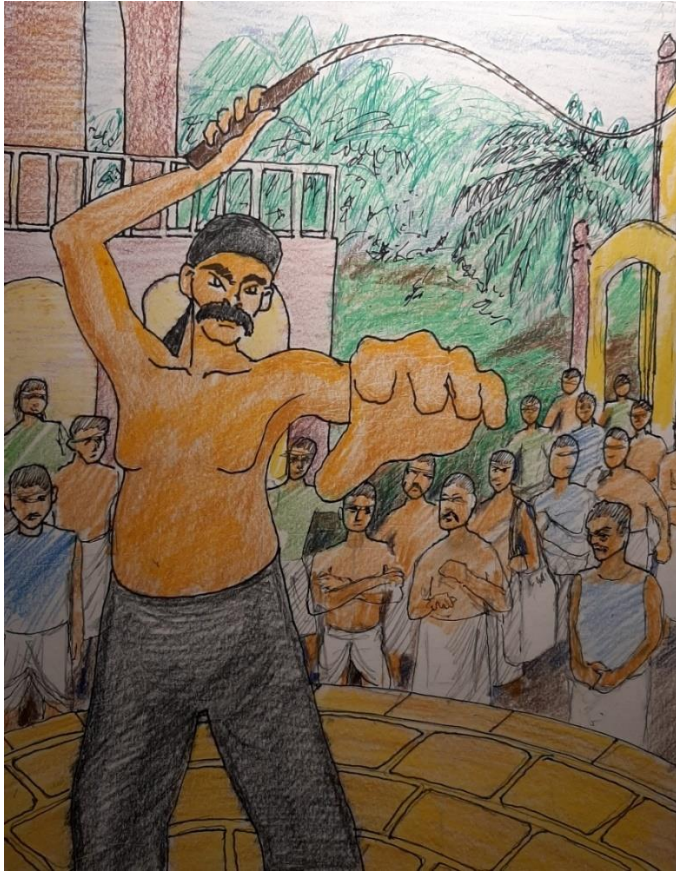
He carefully stuck the head of the axe between two of the fence boards and pulled. One of the boards started to move and then CRACK! It made a loud noise in the night as the wood of the fence split.

His heart was racing, his mouth went dry, and he panicked. He shoved his arm through the fence and grabbed some flowers, and then he ran toward his home as fast as he could. Just then he heard footsteps running, coming closer. He panicked again, and froze. He felt like his heart had jumped up into his throat, choking him.

The footsteps came closer, and he heard the guard shout. Now another guard was running toward him too.

The guards caught him and tied his hands together, and took him to a small shed to wait until morning for the king to tell what punishment he would get.

The next day, the king ordered his punishment.



As he was whipped on his bare back with big long thorny sticks, knowing that neither he nor his wife could go to the festival, he could only think:

“Oh my wife, I shall miss going to the festival with you dressed in yellow and red with your arm around me.”

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What did the wife want to have for the festival? (a colorful sari)
2. What did the wife want to do with the safflowers? (color some cloths to make a red and yellow sari and shawl)
3. Where did she suggest her husband could get the safflowers? (the king's garden)
4. Why didn't her husband want to get the safflowers from the king's garden? (it was stealing, and he might get caught by the guards and killed)
5. How did she feel when at first he didn't want to steal the safflowers? (miserable)
6. Did the wife seem worried about her husband's safety? (no)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION – Craving:

When the wife thought about the festival, what was she worried about? What clothes she would wear, being embarrassed wearing old clothes, and what others would think of her, wearing old clothes.

Although she was poor, she desperately wanted colorful beautiful clothes. She had a good idea to create some colorful clothes by herself, but she would need her husband to steal something for her (safflowers). Her desire to have new clothes was so strong that she didn't care that her husband would have to steal.

We often desire things because we see what others have, and we want to have it too – a new toy, new videogame, stylish clothes.

When the desire is so strong that we forget about other things that are important, we call it “craving.”

For example, have you ever wanted to eat a favorite food so much that you would sneak some of it when no one is looking?

Did you ever grab something from someone else because you wanted it so much, although you knew they would be angry with you for grabbing it?

Have you ever gotten in trouble for stealing, or taking something you wanted that wasn't yours?

Have you ever forgotten to do homework because you had so much desire to be with a friend or play videogames?

We craved for something so much we didn't think much about what problems it would cause later.

Like the wife in the story who craved for having new clothes so much that she didn't think much about whether her husband would get in trouble.

Or like a person who is shopping and wants to buy something so much she doesn't think about the fact that she doesn't have the money for it, and later she can't pay the bills.

Or like an alcoholic who craves alcohol and doesn't think about what will happen if he drinks too much.

Craving leads to trouble!

When you desire something too much, you're so focused on what you want that you become careless.

You don't think about what bad results might happen.

It may be unsafe, may hurt someone else, or may end up hurting you.

Although we think that trying to get what we want will make us happy, actually, craving makes us miserable because we see what we want and if we can't get it right away, we feel frustrated until we get it. If we can't get it, or if we lose it, we get angry. If others have it, we feel jealous.

So the Buddha taught us not to crave things, not to have too many desires. If we are content with what we have, then we feel more peaceful. Being peaceful is a great accomplishment, especially in today's world where so many people have anxiety, depression and other problems.

#### ACTIVITY:

Bean bag toss: Throw a bean bag back and forth to someone else in the room. Each time a person catches the bean bag and before he tosses it to another person, he must call out one of his favorite things – favorite food, game, hobby, toy, type/brand of clothing, activity, place to go, etc. This helps us be aware of our desires – and possible sources of craving.

## Chapter 4 - THE WORDS OF THE JACKAL (Sandhibheda Jataka)

A cowherd once left one of his cows in the forest. The cow was pregnant, and wanted to protect her calf that was soon to be born. So when she saw a lioness in the forest, she was very scared, thinking the lioness may kill her and her tiny calf for a meal.



But the lioness was kind and spoke nicely to the cow. Having no cowherd or other cows to protect her, the cow had to trust the lioness. And the cow noticed the lioness' large belly,

and saw that she too was going to have a baby.

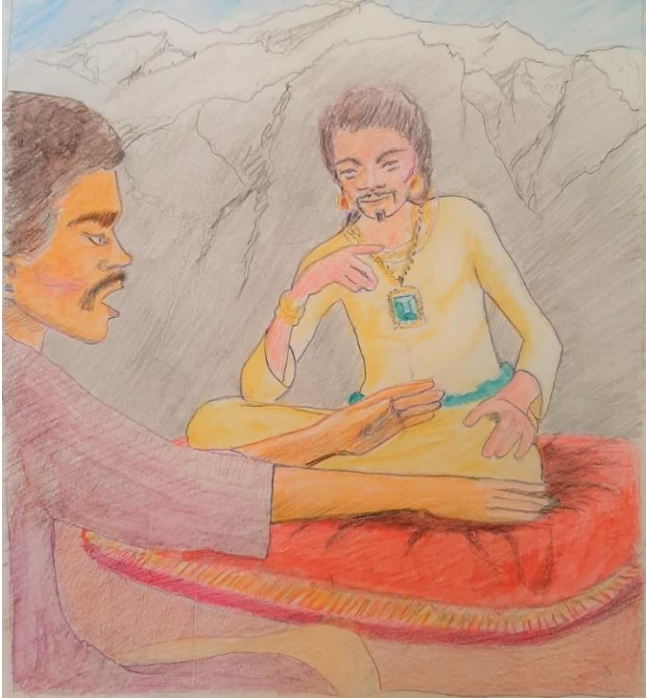


When the cow and lioness each had their baby, the newborn calf and cub became good friends, playing and roaming around together. Over the years they grew into a full-grown lion and bull, and they were the best of friends. They loved to race each other and explore new places together.

They never thought about the fact that other lions and bulls didn't play with each other.

And they certainly didn't think about the fact that lions often hunt bulls to eat, and therefore that bulls think of lions as an enemy.

One day, a man was gathering wood in the forest, and he saw them in the forest playing together.



He then went to sell the wood to the king, who asked him, "Dear friend, have you seen anything unusually wonderful in the forest lately?"

The man replied, "I didn't see anything particularly wonderful. But I did see something quite interesting. I saw a lion and a bull wandering around together, very friendly toward each other."

For a moment, the king looked like he was deep in thought, stroking his beard. Then he said, "If a third animal joins them, there will

certainly be trouble. Come and tell me if you see another animal joining them."



A jackal also saw the young lion and bull playing together.

When the man returned to the forest, he saw the jackal in the bushes, secretly eyeing the young lion and bull.

The man thought, "Ah, there's a third animal. I will tell the king that a third animal has appeared." After gathering some wood, he returned to the city.

The jackal, as usual, was just thinking about his own belly - what food he wanted to eat. He thought,



“I have eaten the meat of almost all animals. But I have never eaten the meat of a bull. And I have never eaten the meat of a lion. I would really, really like to eat some bull meat and lion meat!”

But there was a problem. It wouldn't be easy for him to hunt and kill them when they are together. He realized, “These two will protect each other as long as they are friends, so I won't be able to get them. Hmmm, I must think of a way to change that.”

He thought for a moment, with a sly look on his face.

“Ah! I have an idea. If I make them dislike each other, then I will be able to eat them.”



When the jackal noticed the lion wander away from the bull in search of food, the jackal walked over to the lion and said, “Oh mister lion, did you know that your friend the bull said that you're arrogant and always showing off?”

The lion was surprised, and said, “What? He said that about ME?” No!”

The jackal, raising an eyebrow, had a knowing look on his face, and quietly walked away.

Then the jackal walked over to the bull and stood near him. When the bull looked in his direction, the jackal said walked up close to him as if he were a friend and said,

“Oh mister bull, did you know that your friend the lion said that you are clumsy and foolish?”



The bull looked at him in disbelief, and said, "I don't think he would say that. He's my friend."

The jackal, raising an eyebrow with a knowing look on his face, glanced at the bull and casually walked away.

The bull could see the lion nearby, and imagined the lion saying that the bull is clumsy and foolish.



The lion looked over in the direction of the bull, and imagined the bull saying that the lion is an arrogant show-off. They didn't look at each other with friendly feelings anymore. They each looked at the other with doubt and distrust. They didn't speak much anymore. They felt uncomfortable with each other.

Soon they began to argue.

The lion complained, "Hey, you almost stepped on my foot. Don't you look where you're going?"



The bull replied, “Well, you were stretching your foot out. Why do you have to lay here where I am trying to eat?”

The lion thought, “Maybe the bull is thinking I am arrogant.”

The bull thought, “Maybe the lion is thinking I am clumsy and foolish.”

The more they thought about each other, the more they disliked each other.

They got into a terrible argument, and then started attacking each other with hoofs and claws. Soon each of them had bleeding wounds.

The man by this time had arrived at the king’s palace. He told the king, “You told me to tell you if I see a third animal with the bull and lion. Well, I did see another animal with them.”



The king asked, “What kind of animal was it?”

The man replied, “A jackal, my lord.”

The king raised his eyebrows, and said, “The jackal will cause the lion and bull to fight to their death. We shall find them both dead when we arrive.”

The king took the man out to the forest in a chariot, and the man pointed out the way. Soon, they found the jackal happily eating. With great delight, it took a bite of meat from the lion’s body, and then took a bite of meat from the bull’s body.

The king, seeing that the lion and bull were dead, knew what happened. He knew that the jackal secretly had said bad things about each friend to the other. Talking badly about someone, especially when it's not true, is called slander. The jackal had slandered each of the friends. The king stood up in his chariot and announced,

“See how slander is like a sword. It cuts two friends apart. This is how friends will be if they listen to slander – they will end up in misery. Those who turn away from slander live happily.”

#### QUESTIONS:

1. How did the bull and the lion become friends? (their mothers were friends)
2. What did the jackal want? (to eat the lion and bull)
3. What did the jackal say to the lion? (that the bull said the lion is arrogant and always showing off)
4. What did the jackal say to the bull? (that the lion said the bull is clumsy and foolish)
5. Why did the bull and jackal begin to dislike each other? (they believed what the jackal said)
6. Did the jackal's plan work? (yes)

#### DHARMA DISCUSSION – Slander (saying bad things about others):

The jackal said to the bull something bad about the lion, and said to the lion something bad about the bull. He slandered them – he talked badly about them behind their backs.

When you say something bad or embarrassing about a person that is not true, or not completely true, that is called “slander.”

Whether it's true or not, we might also call it “gossip” or “spreading rumors.”

Has someone ever told you something bad or embarrassing about a friend? Did it change your feelings about your friend?

Have you ever found out that someone talked badly about you behind your back? If so, how did you feel?

If someone says to you bad things about others behind their backs, he or she might be trying to manipulate you, to change your mind and make you dislike the others, like the jackal.

But often, people say bad things about others without really thinking about it. We might do it too.

We might whisper to a friend about how ridiculous someone looks.

We might talk about how ugly someone's clothes are.

We might whisper and giggle about how strange someone speaks.

We might tell a friend that a classmate did something embarrassing.

It's fun to giggle with friends, and to make them laugh.

But when we say bad things about others, is that kind? No.

They may notice us glancing at them and then whispering, giggling or frowning.

They may suspect that we're thinking or saying negative things about them.

And how would they feel? Probably very hurt.

Also, we can develop a bad habit of gossip, slander, and criticizing others.

Talking bad about others causes misery and cuts friends apart, like the king said in the story. And it is a bad karma that will result in harm to ourselves: What we do to others, good or bad, comes back to us sooner or later.

What should we do if a friend says something negative about a person?

Instead of agreeing or giggling, you can ignore it, or be a good example to your friend by saying something nice about the person.

For example: He is a good artist, she is friendly, he helped me in class, she is a good soccer player.

Or you can explain how the negative thing really might not be their fault.

For example: Maybe his parents didn't buy him better clothes, maybe he is shy, maybe she didn't have someone to teach her how to do better, maybe he is having a bad day.

There are some situations where it is appropriate to say something bad about a person: when we are trying to protect someone.

For example, our parents may say something negative about another child to protect you from getting involved in his misbehavior.

Or you can warn a friend about someone's dangerous or wrong behavior to protect your friend.

## Chapter 5 - TWO FISH AND A TURTLE (Gangeyya Jataka)



There was once a tree spirit who lived on the bank of the famous River Ganga in India, also called the Ganges river.



One day he was relaxing near the area where the River Ganga and the River Yamuna join together. As he peered down into the water from where he was sitting on the branch of a tree, he saw a beautiful fish swimming near the shore of the Ganga River.



The fish had strikingly beautiful scales, glittering in light blue with long golden stripes on the top half and golden dots on the bottom half of its body, and a long gold striped fin all along its back and one all along its belly. It had a delicate pointy mouth, not like the large mouth that typical fish

have, and pearly white spots on its face. The fish glided gracefully and effortlessly through the water as if it didn't have any worry in the world. It looked like the royal jewel of the River Ganga.

Then the tree spirit noticed a small flash of light in the Yamuna river. It was another fish, swimming close to the surface.



It was also stunningly beautiful, with the most dazzling yellow scales all over its strong body, and perfectly white fins. It had a wide-eyed innocent look. Its fins waved gently around in the current as it glided around slowly and gracefully with confidence. It seemed to be the royal jewel of the

River Yamuna.

The two fish were each swimming downstream toward the area where the two rivers joined together. The tree spirit wondered what would happen if the two fish met each other. They were swimming toward each other, and since they were the brightest, most colorful things in the water, they each noticed the other.



The blue River Ganga fish blurted out to the other what it was thinking,

“I am beautiful! And so are you.”

The yellow River Yamuna fish also spoke what was in its mind.

“Indeed. It’s true that we are each beautiful. But my brilliant color is like the sun itself,

lighting up the river. My perfectly white fins are like the purest snow. Every being that sees me can’t help but admire me. Your beauty is . . . well, it’s different.”

The blue River Ganga fish said, “My beauty is unique, like no other. I always attract attention of other fish with my brilliant blue scales and golden markings, yet I am cleverly designed to blend in with the blue water, bubbles, and long river grasses so that predators don’t notice me.”

Each fish was very proud of its appearance, and felt that it was the most beautiful being in the river in which it lived. But now they were together in one river. There was a feeling of competition – who was the most beautiful one in the river now? Each fish worried that the other would attract more attention, and more admiration. Each fish worried that it would feel left out, ignored, or even criticized by others now that there was another spectacular-looking fish in the river. Would others prefer the slim look or the strong look? Would they be more attracted to brilliant color or to interesting design? What type of mouth and eyes were cuter?

Each fish argued that its characteristics were more attractive and popular than those of the other fish.





Then the yellow River Yamuna fish saw that someone was listening to them. It was a turtle, sunning itself on a rock near the edge of the river. The blue River Ganga fish noticed the turtle too, called out to him, and said,

“You can decide whether we are beautiful or not!”

They swam up near the turtle so he could see them easily. Then they swam slowly around so he could see all sides of each of them.

The yellow River Yamuna fish said, “Which of us is more beautiful, friend turtle, the Ganga fish or me, the Yamuna fish?”

The turtle answered slowly, “The River Ganga fish is beautiful, and the River Yamuna fish is beautiful. But I am more beautiful than you both.”

His answer shocked both of the fish. They thought, “How can he possibly say that? Turtles look clumsy and slow, with no colorful scales, no graceful fins. They just aren’t attractive. No one would say that an ugly old turtle looks good. And he thinks he looks better than ME? Ridiculous!”

The turtle explained, “The fish of the River Yamuna are beautiful, and the fish of the River Ganga are beautiful. But a four-footed creature with a long neck like mine and a round, spread-out body outshines all of them.”

When the fish heard this, one of them scoffed, “Ah, you jokester Turtle! You didn’t answer our question. But you answer another question that we didn’t ask.”

The other fish said, “We ask him this, and he answers that. What a strange reply! With his own mouth, he praises himself.”

The two fish swam away, disappointed that he wouldn't answer their question, and no longer confident that they were the most beautiful fish in the river.



The tree spirit thought,

“For some moments they are so proud of their beauty, and in the next moment they are upset that their beauty isn't good enough! Attachment to outer beauty causes trouble! Poor things, they haven't developed inner beauty. They only see the mistakes of others - like the turtle bragging - but don't see their own!”

#### QUESTIONS:

1. When the fish met each other, what was the first thing that came to their minds? (that they both looked beautiful)
2. Did they think they were equally beautiful? (no, each thought it looked better than the other)
3. Who did the turtle think was the most beautiful? (himself)
4. What wrongdoing did the fish notice that the turtle did, but not notice that they did themselves? (brag)
5. What do you think “outer beauty” means? (how we look on the outside - for example, our face, hair, body, clothes, makeup, shoes)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION – Vanity and beauty:

The first thing that came to the fishes' minds was how they look. They were extremely proud of their beauty. It was important to them. So when they saw another who also looked beautiful, they felt competitive.



Most of us care about how we look – we like to look good; we want to be confident, wear nice clothes, and not look messy or too unusual.

But thinking too much about how we look - always comparing how we look with others and feeling upset when someone comes along who we think looks better than us or has better clothes than us - becomes a problem.

Though we don't argue like the two fish about who looks better, we have a discussion in our own

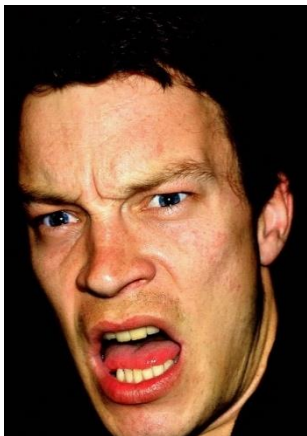
mind about who looks better.

We might spend too much time and energy thinking and worrying about how we look and what we wear, and how others look.

That makes us unhappy, jealous, and maybe greedy for new clothes.

We might talk about how bad someone else looks.

Being too attached to how we look is called “vanity” or being “vain.”



What happens when someone who has outer beauty – who seems to have a beautiful face - becomes hostile, angry, or jealous, or arrogant? Do they still look beautiful? Their beauty disappears. We might want to get away from them.

If they often have negative emotions like anger, hatred, jealousy or arrogance, then when they get older, their face looks more stressed or dissatisfied. Their smile begins to look fake. Their eyes don't shine with real happiness. Others may feel uncomfortable around them. Their outer beauty fades away when they don't have much inner beauty.

What is inner beauty?

The beauty that arises when we have a good heart. What does having a good heart mean? Having good qualities like loving-kindness, compassion, tolerance, and patience.

Can you think of someone who has these qualities?

How about your parents, grandparents, or spiritual teacher?

What do you like about the way they look at you?

A happy smile? Peaceful, kind eyes? Maybe it's hard to describe.

But you enjoy looking at the face of someone who has inner beauty.

They radiate something beautiful!

It doesn't matter what type of clothes, eyes, nose or mouth they have, how straight their teeth are, how stylish their hair looks, or whether they have teeth or hair!

How do you feel when you see a very sweet old man or woman? Joy!

When we have a good heart, our inner beauty doesn't go away even when we get old.

## Chapter 6 - THE QUEEN WHO COMPLAINED TOO MUCH (Sujāta Jataka)

A very long time ago, there was a good king named King Brahmadata who ruled over Benares, a place in India that was considered very holy.

He had a very beautiful wife, the queen. They had a son, who grew up to be a very intelligent young man who studied at the famous Takkasila University.



Unfortunately, one day the good King Brahmadata died. The son then became the next king, and being very fair, well-mannered, patient and kind like his father, he ruled the kingdom well, like his father.

His mother, the queen, was very different from her son. Living in a palace, she had a comfortable life, and many servants.



But she was arrogant and demanding, so much so that as she got older, her face always looked annoyed and had become set in a permanent scowl. She was always complaining. Also, she was impatient and often dissatisfied. She was not happy with the meals she was served, whining,

“Ugh, we’re having THIS again for dinner?”

She was not content with all the clothes and things she owned. She would haughtily say,

“I don’t have anything to wear. Oh, this ugly old thing. I need a new one!”

And she was not pleased with what others did for her. She had complaints like, “Why did you bring that one? That’s not really what I wanted. That doesn’t go together!”

She was often loudly grumbling or shouting about something, like “Don’t touch my stuff! Don’t look at me like that! Get out of my way! Why do they have to take so long?”

Or, she was criticizing someone in a harsh voice, shrieking, “That’s WRONG! What were you thinking? How could you be so blind? Are you an idiot? What’s wrong with you?”

She had a habit of saying bad things about others. Insulting words flew out of her mouth, and she was very cruel to those who displeased her, shouting at them with a piercing voice so loud that everyone around her wanted to cover their ears. Just the sound of her voice from a distant part of the palace was enough to make a person want to walk away. But being near her was almost unbearable.



Her son was embarrassed by her behavior. He wanted to tell her to quit complaining, be patient and not be so demanding.

He wanted her to be kind to others, and stop criticizing, insulting and talking badly about them.

He looked at her pleadingly when she misbehaved, hoping she would see the disappointment on his face and recognize how terrible she sounded. But she was focused on whatever she was complaining about and didn’t seem to care about how he felt, or how anyone else felt, for that matter. He kept waiting for a chance to hint to her that she needed to change her ways. But she would ignore him whenever she was caught up in her criticisms and insults.



Time after time he saw the hurt look on the faces of those she criticized.

She was causing so much agony to others, and he felt powerless to prevent it, even though he was the king. She was his mother, and he couldn’t be disrespectful to her. He felt compassion for the pain she must be feeling inside to behave in this way.

He wished he could take away her unhappiness and teach her how to be content, how to calm her mind, how to have lovingkindness and compassion for others.



One day he went on a walk with his mother outside the palace. As they walked along the road, a blue jay suddenly screeched loudly with a very unpleasant, harsh sound in a tree above them. It screeched again and again. Even though the blue jay is beautiful to look at, the people nearby put their fingers in their ears and said,

“What a harsh voice!” “What a loud shriek!” “Bird, don’t make that noise!”



The king and his mother then walked through a park. There was a cuckoo bird perched on a tree that began to sing with a sweet soft sound. All the people nearby were delighted at the bird’s voice. They clasped their hands or stretched them out toward the bird, in appreciation of its beautiful voice. They said, “Oh what a soft voice!” “What a kind voice!” “What a gentle voice!” “Sing away, birdie, sing

away, we love it!”

They stood there, stretching their necks high to see the cuckoo bird perched in the tree, eagerly listening.

The king, noticing these events with the two types of birds, thought, “Here is my chance to drop a hint to my mother!

He said, “Mother, when the people heard a blue jay’s cry on the road, everyone plugged their ears and called out ‘Don’t make that noise.’ No one likes those harsh sounds.”

Then he continued, “There are those who may be beautiful or handsome to look at, but if they have a harsh voice, they are not loved by anyone. There is a bird that you may often see, the cuckoo, which isn’t very pretty, but its soft voice is so pleasant to hear that everyone loves that bird.”

He said respectfully, “Therefore, your voice should be gentle and sweet, with wise words, not puffed up with arrogance, with conceit.”

When the king had explained this to her, he won her over to his way of thinking. From then on, she learned to stop focusing on herself, her discomforts, desires, likes and dislikes, and instead to consider how others might be feeling, and how her complaints, criticisms and demands cause so much pain to all. Rather than seeking attention and respect by being demanding and critical, she learned to care about others and earn their love and respect through kindness.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. How did the queen look when she was young? (very beautiful)
2. How did she look when she got older? (she looked angry, her face always in a scowl)
3. Why didn’t her son just tell her to stop complaining? (he didn’t want to be disrespectful)
4. Why did the people dislike the beautiful blue jay? (they didn’t like its harsh voice)
5. How should one’s voice be, according to the king? (gentle and sweet)

#### DHARMA DISCUSSION – Complaining:

The queen in the story felt that she was powerful – she was rich and beautiful, and she was the boss, along with her son, the king. Others had to listen to her and obey her. She could get whatever she wanted, and she could make others do things for her.



But as many people with such power discover, they are still not satisfied. They think that more power or getting more things might make them happy, so they expect and demand more and more.



They may become arrogant with all their expectations and demands.

They may enjoy or even crave the attention when they make others do what they want, and may enjoy the admiration or envy of others who wish they could have such power.

But not all people who are very rich or powerful behave this way. For example, who in the story was rich and powerful, yet kind-hearted, respectful, and humble? The king. There are some people who aren't particularly rich and powerful but still

want to feel powerful and get attention, so they demand, complain and criticize a lot, putting on a show of acting "high maintenance."

They think that makes them look important.

When others try to fulfill their demands and respond to their complaints, they feel superior and what happens to their ego?

It grows, it gets boosted.

But do you think that they really feel confident?

Probably not. They likely don't feel confident in themselves as they really are without putting on a show, without trying to look important.

Having a big ego is not the same as having confidence.

People with a big ego think about themselves too much so they don't care much about how others feel.

But people can be confident as well as kind and compassionate.

How do you think the queen was feeling after her husband died?

Maybe she was lonely or sad.

She seemed unhappy. That's what made her complain so much.

By focusing on herself, what she likes and doesn't like, she didn't care much about others and didn't show lovingkindness that would attract others to be friendly with her.

So, she sought attention instead by making others do things for her.

When we see someone who behaves that way, we can be like the king and have compassion for them, knowing that deep inside they aren't really happy, that they don't have the joy and true friendships that come from having real lovingkindness and compassion.

And what if we start behaving like the queen?

We should notice if we start to demand, complain and criticize a lot.

Does this ever happen to you? It may happen sometimes when we feel irritable, upset, tired, or in a bad mood.

But if it becomes a habit, then like the queen we can try to stop focusing on ourselves, our likes and dislikes, and remember:

How do our complaints, criticisms and demands sound to others?

Annoying!

Remember that if we want others to help you, what kind of voice should we use? Using a kind voice rather than a demanding one leads to a better response from others.

Rather than seeking attention by being demanding and critical, how can we earn the love and respect of others? Through kindness.

Try doing random acts of kindness, even to your family members, and it might put you in a better mood.

## Chapter 7 - SAVING THE ANTELOPE (Kurunga-Miga Jataka)



Once upon a time, the Bodhisattva (who in a future life would be the Buddha), was born as an antelope.

He lived at the edge of a forest near a beautiful lake.



Not far from the lake there was a tree, on which a bird called a woodpecker liked to perch, sitting on a branch high up on the tree.

From his perch, he could look far out over the forest and the lake.

The woodpecker used his beak to pick insects to eat from the bark of trees. He could communicate with other woodpeckers far away by drumming loudly with his beak on a tree trunk.



Next to the lake there lived a turtle. He loved to sun himself on the rocks next to the lake.

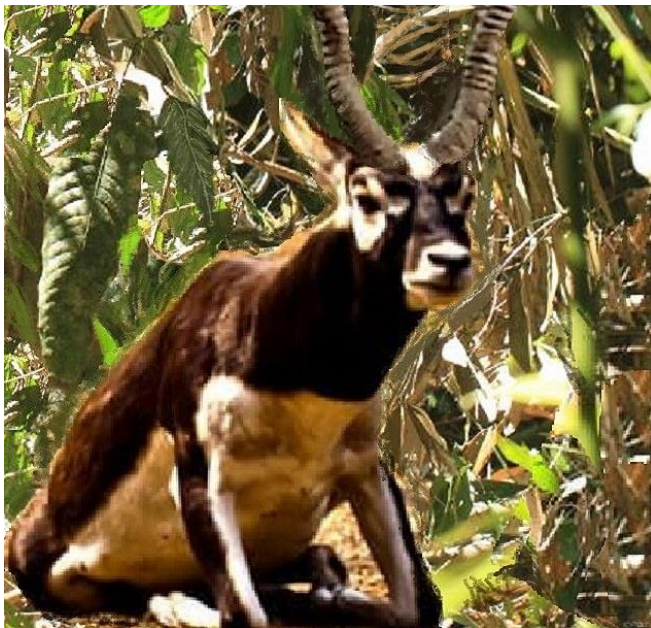
The antelope, woodpecker and turtle often saw each other, and they soon became good friends. They helped each other in several ways.

The woodpecker, being able to see from high up in all directions, could warn his friends if he saw something threatening coming, such as a group of hunters or a lion. The turtle, with his body so low to the ground, could show his friend the antelope where fresh new grass was starting to grow in the early springtime, and could show his friend the woodpecker where some tasty insects were hiding in fallen trees. The antelope, with his big sensitive ears, could warn his friends when he heard the whoosh of a hawk's wings, or the rustle of a fox or other animal moving in the forest underbrush. These animals and birds of prey might hunt and eat other birds and turtles.



One day, a hunter was wandering around near the lake, but the woodpecker didn't notice him down under the thick forest canopy. In the mud along the shore of the lake, the hunter saw the footprint of the antelope. He thought to himself, "Ah, a big healthy antelope roasted over a fire would make a delicious dinner!"

He set a trap, called a snare trap, made of strong leather straps hidden in the weeds near the lake, so the antelope would unknowingly step into it and be unable to escape the loop of leather straps. After the trap was set, the hunter went back home.



Later in the afternoon, the antelope went for his usual daily walk down to the lake to get a drink of water. As he stepped along the path to the edge of the lake, his foot got stuck in the trap! He kicked and pulled his foot again and again to escape, but he couldn't get free. He let out a long and loud desperate cry.

The woodpecker, hearing his dear friend crying out, flew down from his tree-top.

The turtle, hearing the loud cry, came out of the water. They went toward the sound, where they found their dear friend caught hopelessly in the trap.



The woodpecker said to the turtle,

“Friend, you have strong jaws – bite through this leather snare. I will go and make sure the hunter stays away from here. If we both do our best, our friend will not lose his life.”

The turtle began to gnaw at one of the leather straps with his strong and sharp jaws.

The woodpecker flew to the hunter’s house and waited on a tree outside.



After the sun rose the next morning, the hunter went out, with the knife in his hand, hoping to find an antelope in his trap. The woodpecker cried out, flapped his wings, and struck the hunter in the face as he started to walk out the door of his house.

“Some bird of bad luck has hit me!” the hunter thought.

He turned around and went back inside, and lay down for a little while. Then he got up again and took his knife.

The woodpecker thought, “The first time he went out the front door, so now he will leave by the back door.” The bird flew

around to the back of the house.

The hunter reasoned the same way, thinking, “When I went out by the front door, I got bad luck. Now I will go out the back.” And so he did.

The bird cried out again and whacked him in the face with his wing.

Thinking that he was struck again by a bad-luck bird, the hunter exclaimed, "This creature will not let me go!"

The bird had distracted him from going to check his trap. He went back inside and lay down for a while. Then he picked up his knife, walked out of his house and started off toward the forest.

The woodpecker flew swiftly back to the forest to warn his friends, "Here comes the hunter!"



By this time, the turtle had gnawed all the way through the tough leather straps except for one extremely tough one. His jaws felt so sore from chewing through the leather he thought they might break, and his mouth was all smeared with blood.

The antelope saw the hunter coming very quickly, and he jumped up, bursting through the leather strap, and bounded into the woods.



The woodpecker perched on his tree top. But the turtle was so weak that he just lay there where he was. The hunter saw him and threw him into a bag. Then he tied the bag to a tree.

The antelope saw that his friend the turtle was hanging in the bag on the tree, and was determined to save his friend's life. So, the antelope walked back to where the hunter could see him and pretended that he was terribly weak.



The hunter saw him and, thinking that he was weak and unable to run, pulled out his knife and started running toward the antelope, ready to butcher him.

The antelope moved away and limped along just fast enough to keep out of the hunter's reach. He walked deeper and deeper into the forest as the hunter followed him, hoping for a chance to sink his knife into the antelope.



And after they had gone for quite a distance, the antelope suddenly bounded away and returned as swift as the wind by another way to where the turtle was still hanging in the bag on the tree.



The antelope lifted the bag with his horns, threw it gently on the ground, ripped it open, and let the turtle out. The woodpecker flew down from the tree to be with his dear friends.

The antelope spoke to both of them, "My life has been saved by you, and you have done a true friend's duty to me. But now the hunter will try to snatch and take both of you. So, friend woodpecker, go to another place with your family. And you, friend turtle, dive into the water to escape."

They did so, and the antelope went deeper in the forest. The hunter returned to where he had left his bag in the tree, and found that the empty bag was torn. He picked it up and went home, disappointed. The three friends were safe from the hunter and remained good friends for the rest of their lives.

## QUESTIONS:

1. How did the hunter know that an antelope might be nearby? (he saw the hoof print of the antelope)
2. How did the turtle help the antelope break free of the trap? (he chewed through the leather straps)
3. How did the woodpecker help the antelope get away? (he flew at the hunter and hit him, distracting him from going to check his trap)
4. What did the hunter do to the turtle? (put him in a bag and hung him in a tree)
5. How did the antelope save the turtle? (he pretended he was weak so the hunter would follow him into the forest, and then ran back and freed the turtle from the bag)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION – Interdependence:

In the story, the three friends helped each other in several ways.

They were dependent on each other for food and safety.

Who are you dependent on?

Your parents, teachers, maybe other family members, and friends.

But who else provides you with what you need to live comfortably?

Who makes the food you eat, before your parents give it to you?

Grocery store employees, truck drivers that bring food to the grocery store, farmers who grow the food, factory workers who package the food.

Who made your home? Many people built and repaired your home.

Who made all the things you own and the things in your home?

Many people working in factories created the clothes you wear, the furniture, computers and appliances in your house, and your parents' car.

Who helps you stay healthy? Doctors, hospital employees, and others.

Who makes your community safe and pleasant to live in?



Police, government officials, street repair crews, sanitation workers, and many others.

These people work hard and do their jobs well, whether it is making sure your food is clean and safe to eat, or helping you in some other way to live comfortably and safely.

Of course there are exceptions - people who don't do their jobs well - but most do good work that helps many others.

We are all dependent on each other – that means we are interdependent.

Others are dependent on you, too. You not only can directly help your parents, teachers, classmates and friends, but you have other effects on them, too.

Can you think of some ways that your words or behavior affects others? Your smile, kindness and good attitude helps them, for example, to feel peaceful and positive. So you see we are all interdependent.

Buddhist teachings often mention interdependence.

Not only are humans dependent on each other, but also animals, plants (with which we exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide), insects (such as bees that pollinate plants we need for food, and mosquitos that need our blood) are interdependent with us.

What we do affects other beings in big or small ways, directly or indirectly. Thinking about interdependence is important.

When you think of other beings who help us, how do you feel?

You appreciate it, you feel thankful, it uplifts your mood.

And the more often we feel grateful, the more we develop lovingkindness.

For example, when someone does something good, then we think about doing something nice for them in return.

Or maybe we “pay it forward,” which means when someone helps us, we remember to help someone else in a similar way.

Even when someone does something unpleasant, we can try to appreciate that we learned something from it – we can feel thankful to them for the lesson learned.

Interdependence means that everything exists and everything happens as a result of causes and conditions.

Can you think of some causes and conditions for the existence of a flower?

A flower is caused by a seed from another flower landing on the ground.

The conditions of the right amount of rain, sunlight, and warmth, and good soil, allow the seed to grow. And it is protected from being eaten by deer or

rabbits, and from being trampled. The seed came from a plant that itself had to have all the right conditions for it to grow, and in turn that plant grew from a seed from another plant that had to have the right conditions, and so on back through time.

Can you think of how a car can exist? What are its causes and conditions? Some causes of a car are the many people who design it, build the parts, assemble it in a factory, transport it for sale, and sell it at a dealership. There must be a car factory and a car parts factory, companies to create the factories, and materials for the car parts.

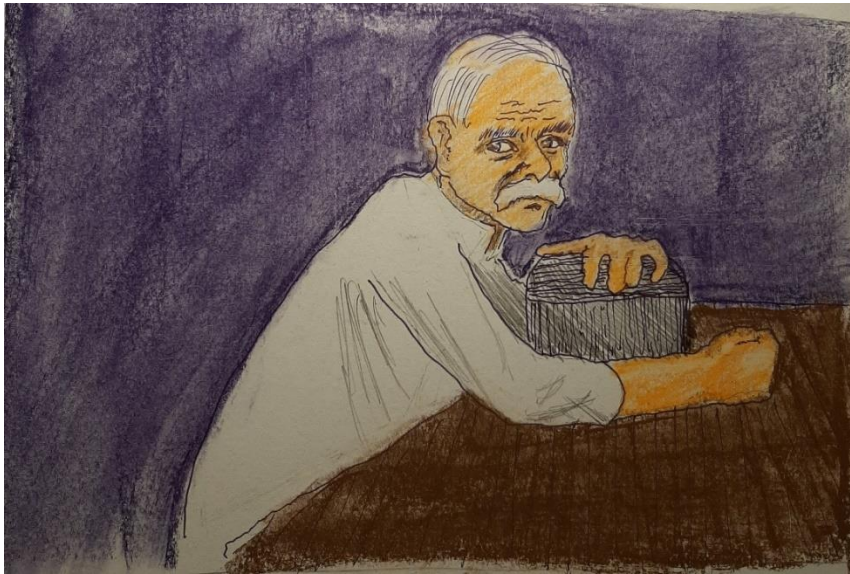
Where do the car parts come from? Rubber for tires comes from rubber trees, metals are dug up from mines in the earth, and plastic comes from oil that also comes from the earth.

These are only the more obvious causes and conditions.

But you can't count the many causes and conditions if you deeply think about all the things that must happen in just the right way in order for something to exist.

## Chapter 8 - THE BURIED TREASURE (Nanda Jataka)

There was once an elderly man who had worked hard all his life and saved a lot of money, which he kept in a box. He had a young son whom he loved very much. And, he had a beautiful young wife. He thought to himself, as he looked at her,



“When I die, my wife, as young as she is, surely will marry another man and spend all my money that I worked so hard for instead of giving it to my son. Then he will inherit nothing. I am getting old now. I must hide the money from my wife and somehow make sure my son gets it when

he’s old enough. But how should I do this?”

He thought carefully, “Hmmm, I could bury the money, and tell someone who I can really trust where it is, and then he could tell my son where to find it.”

But who could he really trust? He said aloud, “Ah! My dear loyal servant Nanda!” He called out to Nanda, who said,

“Yes sir, what can I do for you?”

The elderly man said, “My dear Nanda, let’s go for a walk in the forest today. I have something very important to do. Bring a shovel. We must get back quickly before my wife gets home.”

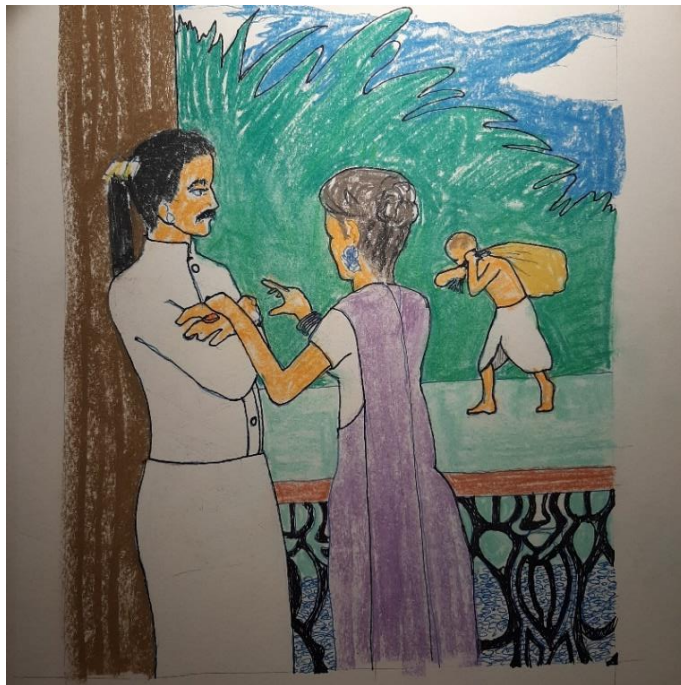
He took Nanda with him and they walked deep into the forest. The elderly man stopped under a big tall tree, and Nanda dug a hole under the tree.



They placed the box of money in the hole and buried it and scattered leaves over the fresh dirt. Then the elderly man said,

“My dear Nanda, when I die, you must give all this money in the box to my son. But you must keep this a secret until I pass away. And don’t let this forest be sold.”

After some time, the elderly man passed away. Years later, his son finished school, and returned home. He was now the man in charge of the family.



One day, his mother said to him, “Son, your father buried all his money. And the closest person to him was Nanda. So, I’m sure Nanda knows where the money is. You should ask Nanda to get the money and give it to you so you can take care of the family.”

The son later talked to Nanda and asked, “Nanda, do you have any idea where Father buried our money?”

“Yes sir. I know where he buried it,” Nanda replied.

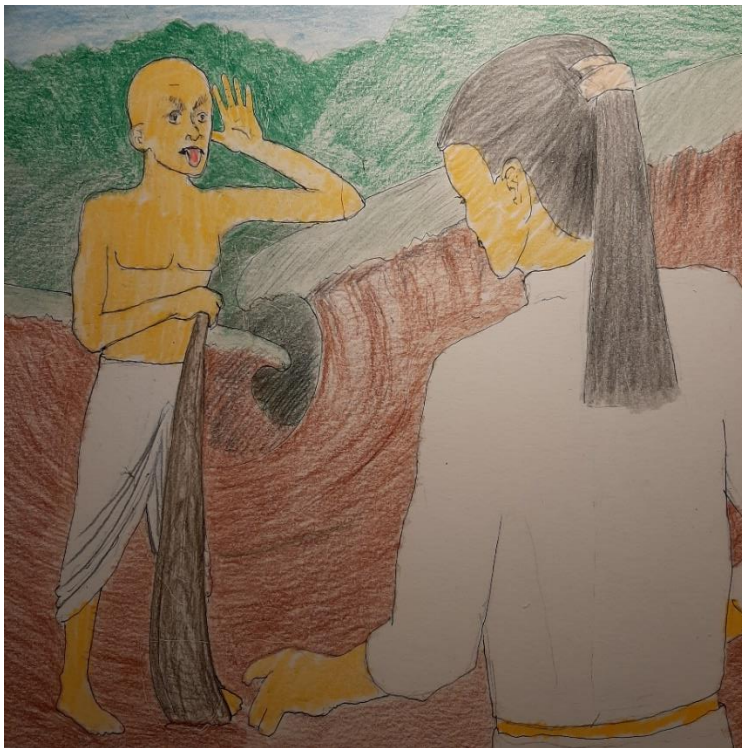
The son asked, “Where is it buried?”

Nanda answered, “In the forest, sir.”

The son said, "Well, let's go there then."

Nanda brought a shovel and basket, and they walked together deep into the forest. They walked silently for a long time. Nanda, leading the way, cleared thorn bushes and overgrown branches away so the son could walk easily without getting scratched.

Then, suddenly, Nanda changed. He walked under some tree branches which snapped back into the son's face. Nanda stood still, and his face looked very arrogant. With a loud voice, he said to the young man,



"It's too hot out here. And so many insects! You know, you're just a servant, the son of a servant girl. Why would YOU have any money here?"

The son was shocked. He thought, "What? I've never seen Nanda behave this way. What should I do? I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that."

Nanda was thinking, "I know the secret of where all the treasure is. I am the only one who knows. Only I have

the power over *all that money!*"

The son said, "Well, let's go back then." They turned around and returned home.

Nanda acted normally when they got back, as if nothing happened. Several days later, as he was serving the son some tea, Nanda was talking pleasantly to the son about his father.

"Ah, how I miss your father. Such a kind and generous man. I used to bring him his tea right here on the veranda every morning."

The son responded, "I miss Father very much too. Nanda, you know where Father hid the money in the forest, right? Let's go find it today."

"Oh yes, of course," Nanda replied.

Nanda willingly led him into the forest, carrying the shovel. But as soon as they arrived at the same area in the forest, Nanda's face changed again, as he thought of how important he was, with the power over all the money. He looked around irritably and scowled,

"So, you had to drag me out here again today. You don't even know how to handle money. Who do you think you are? I don't care what you want. I'm sweating, and I am sick of walking out here. I should be taking a nap right now. I am going home."

The young man, shocked again, said nothing. Nanda then turned around and started walking home. The son shook his head in disbelief, and thought, "I can't believe this. What has happened to him?"

Again, when they returned home, Nanda acted perfectly normal, polite and helpful.

The son thought, "This is so strange. When we leave the house, he always intends to reveal where the money is. But as soon as we are out in the forest, he is abusive to me. I don't see why he does this. I should ask the old friend of my father. Maybe he knows what is going on with Nanda"

The next day, the son went to talk to a wise old friend of his father. The son described what happened, and asked,

"What is the real reason for Nanda's behavior?"

His father's friend said, "The spot where Nanda stands when he speaks abusively to you, my friend, is the place where your father's money is buried. Go again with Nanda into the forest. When he starts talking abusively to you again, say to him, 'Whom are you talking to?' and pull him away. Then take the shovel and dig down into that spot. You will find your buried family treasure right there. Dig it up and make him carry it home for you."

He said emphatically, “The gold and jewels are buried where Nanda, the servant, so loudly hollers.” He further advised the son, “With the money, take care of the family and be generous to those who need help.”

The young man respectfully thanked the old friend, and went back home.

The son took Nanda the next day out to the forest. When Nanda again started speaking arrogantly, the son did exactly as the wise old man said. He dug down in that spot and found the treasure that his father had buried.

He used the money very wisely to take care of the family’s needs. He also was very generous, using some of it to help other people in need.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the father bury his money? (To hide it from his wife)
2. Why did the father tell Nanda about it? (So Nanda could tell the son when he gets older)
3. At the time the son asked Nanda about the father’s money, was Nanda willing to show him where the money was buried? (Yes)
4. When they arrived a certain spot in the forest, what kind of attitude did Nanda have? (An arrogant attitude)
5. What did the wise old friend of the father advise the son to do when Nanda starts speaking abusively? (Pull Nanda away, dig into that spot, find the treasure there, and make him carry it home for you)

#### DHARMA DISCUSSION - Arrogance:

Can you think of some words that have a meaning similar to the word “arrogant”?

Egoistic, conceited, self-centered, show-off, selfish, snobby.

Arrogant people act like they are better or more important than others.

They like to show off what they have and what they can do.



They like to control others, and make them do what they tell them to do.

Many arrogant people don't like to be told what to do.

They expect to be admired, to be popular, to be the center of attention, to get special privileges, to be first, and to get the best.

They don't think much about the feelings of others, what others need, what others would like.

What is the opposite of arrogance? Humility, being humble.

What does that mean?

Thinking of what others might need or want, appreciating the success and talent of others, being respectful, and listening to others.

It also means being aware of your own imperfections and weaknesses.

In the story, Nanda became arrogant when he came close to power - close to the money that would give him power to buy what he likes, and to be respected as someone with a higher status.

It happened to him because he never had much money or power before, being a servant all his life, and being treated like he's not important.

With money, he would have freedom and could tell other people what to do.

So when he thought he had power over the buried treasure, he already started acting like he had power, like he was the big boss.

Have you ever seen someone become arrogant when they suddenly become important, popular or famous, or when they suddenly get a lot of money, a big award or something very special?

If so, what kind of behaviors did you notice?

Did they start bossing others around, hanging out only with their popular friends, ignoring others, or blaming others for their mistakes?



Even when someone feels a little bit more important, such as when they have a friend visiting their house, they can become more demanding, less tolerant, and more selfish, for example toward their sisters and brothers.

Our humility is tested when we have a talent, when we win, when we become a leader, or when we are popular.

We should watch out for any signs of arrogance in ourselves – any bossiness, showing off, impatience, expecting admiration or special treatment.

What can you do to be humble?

- appreciate the talents and success of others,
- appreciate those who taught, guided, supported and helped you,
- invite others to join in or go first,
- give others a chance,
- notice what others may need or what they might like,
- look for ways to help others and help them,
- listen carefully to others' ideas.

## Chapter 9 - THE TREE SPIRITS (Vyaggha Jataka)



There was once a wise tree spirit who lived in a beautiful tree in a forest.



Not far from him lived another tree spirit in a big old magnificent tree.

Also in that forest there lived a ferocious lion and an equally ferocious tiger.

There were several villages in the area, and the people from the villages had to walk into the forests to find wood for cooking and warming their homes. They cut down trees to build new houses and buildings, and even cut down whole forests to plough the soil and plant crops such as wheat or vegetables.

But none of them dared to enter the big patch of forest where the two tree spirits lived. The ferocious lion and tiger lived there, and the people were well aware of it because they saw the big paw prints with claws in the mud near that patch of forest. Also, there were a few people walking along the road who had caught a glimpse of a big bushy mane or an orange-and-black-striped body lurking in the thick forest.

So, none of the villagers had ever cut any tree in that patch of forest, and they walked quickly past it for fear that the lion or tiger might be hungry enough to attack and eat them.

In fact, the tiger and lion did kill and eat all kinds of creatures. The deer and antelope, monkeys and foxes, rabbits and birds – all were hunted and feasted on by the lion and tiger.

After they were finished eating, they left the remaining animal bones on the ground and went away to rest. The bones stunk terribly after a few days.

The tree spirit who lived in the big old tree did not like to smell that stench and see the animal bones. He said to the wise tree spirit,



“Good friend, the forest is full of foul stench all because of this lion and this tiger. I can’t stand it any longer. I’m going to chase them away.”



The wise tree spirit said, “Good friend, it is just these two creatures that protect our homes, the trees. Once they are chased away, our homes will be destroyed. If men don’t see the lion and tiger tracks in the mud, they will think they have gone away and then the men will cut all the forest down, make it all one open space, and plough the land. All our trees will be destroyed! Please don’t do this!”

But the foolish tree spirit didn’t want to believe his friend and didn’t take his advice. He was too disgusted with the messy and smelly animal bones laying around. All he thought about was how gross it was, and that no one should leave a smelly mess in the forest. It annoyed him every day, and put him in a bad mood. He imagined how much better life would be without the lion and tiger to ruin everything around him.

One day he just couldn’t stand it anymore. Being a spirit, he could change his form. He transformed himself to appear like a huge frightening monster, and chased after the lion and tiger. They had never seen anything like that before and impulsively ran away. They went to another forest and found plenty of animals for food there, so they didn’t want to return to their old forest.

The people who walked along the road noticed that there were no more fresh lion or tiger tracks near the patch of forest where the lion and tiger lived before. They wondered what happened to the lion and tiger. After several months of not seeing any lion or tiger paw prints there, the villagers were quite sure that the lion and tiger must have died or gone away to another area.

One day, a group of men came and started cutting down trees in the forest.

The foolish tree spirit heard the rhythmic thuds of axes cutting into trees. He saw the trembling leaves and branches of trees that were being cut.



Trees fell with a groan and a loud crash onto the forest floor. Birds were flying around in all directions and animals were running away from the tree cutters. He realized that the wise tree spirit was right – once the lion and tiger were gone, the forest would be destroyed. He was frightened that the men would cut down all the trees in

the forest, including the huge old tree that he stayed in. Feeling desperately afraid, he had to admit his mistake to the wise tree spirit and beg him for advice. With an anxious voice, he said,

“Ah, friend, I didn’t do as you said, but instead I chased the creatures away and now men have found out that they are gone, and they are cutting down the forest! What is to be done?”

The wise tree spirit said, “The lion and tiger are now living in another forest. You must go and bring them back here.”

The other tree spirit went immediately to the other forest and found where they were. He stood in front of them and said, with a respectful greeting,

“Come back O Tiger and Lion! Come back to the forest you lived in before and don’t let it be flattened into a field! Without you both, the men and their axes will cut it down. Without that forest, you will be homeless.”

The tiger and lion roared, “Go away! We won’t come back.”



They had a new home there and didn't want to go back. There was nothing the tree spirit could do to change their mind.

The tree spirit, with deep sadness and regret, returned alone to the forest. And after a few days, the men had cut down the whole patch of forest, made it into a big field, ploughed the land and started planting grains there. The forest—all the animals and birds that had lived there, the wildflowers, the lush forest plants, and all the big lovely trees—were gone.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What did the lion and tiger do that was annoying the foolish tree spirit? (they left stinking bones in the forest after they ate)
2. What did the wise tree spirit advise the other tree spirit not to do? (not to chase the lion and tiger away)
3. Why did the foolish tree spirit chase them away anyway? (he couldn't stand the smell and mess)
4. When he saw the trees being cut, what did he finally realize would happen after he chased the lion and tiger away? (the forest would be destroyed)
5. Why didn't the lion and tiger want to come back? (they were happy in the other forest, there were plenty of animals for food)

#### DHARMA DISCUSSION – Tolerance:

The tree spirit couldn't stand the smell and mess. He couldn't tolerate it. He had no tolerance for the lion and tiger's eating habits.

What does it mean when we have "intolerance" or "no tolerance"?

You might think of a food intolerance, when our body has a negative reaction, similar to an allergy, to a certain type of food.

But intolerance in the context of the Dharma is not an intolerance in the body but an intolerance in the mind: when we feel annoyed, angry or even hateful toward someone who is disturbing us in some way, or when we don't agree with what they say, what they do, or what they believe.

If we let our feelings of intolerance build up, we might say or do something that we later regret.

In the story, the foolish tree spirit let his feelings of intolerance build up until he got very angry and chased away the lion and tiger.

People who have different political views, different beliefs about religion, different lifestyles or cultures, or different expectations of how much noise is appropriate, often let their intolerance turn into deep hatred.

Like the tree spirit, their mind focuses on thoughts like, “they should not do that” or “what’s wrong with them?” and negative thoughts build up more and more, into rage or even violence.

What happens when big groups of people are not tolerant?

They can end up fighting with each other or starting a war.

That is why it is so important for everyone to learn to be tolerant.

We have to live with many different kinds of people around us – in school, the neighborhood, when we travel, everywhere we go - people who have different views, cultures, attitudes, and behaviors.

Can you think of some ways we can become more tolerant of those who are different than us?

We can learn more about them, get to know them, so we can understand them, rather than thinking about how they “should” be more like us.

We can be compassionate, imagining how they might feel.

Of course, if someone is harming or putting us or someone else in danger, we don’t want to be tolerant of that; we must try to put a stop to it.

But if someone is just doing something annoying, what would you do to remain calm?

Remember not to be like the tree spirit – don’t think about what they “shouldn’t do,” don’t try to control them, but instead control your own mind.

See if you can focus on what you’re doing rather than what they are doing.

Smile at them, and see if they get the gentle hint that they’re annoying you.

In some situations, we might ask to join in with them, such as when they are playing a game.

When we learn to calm our mind by practicing meditation and mindfulness, then we don’t get so easily annoyed.

And when we practice patience and tolerance more often, then we learn to be patient and tolerant in many different situations.

Sometimes, a person is clearly disturbing others – being loud, reckless, or doing something else that is very distracting, but not harming anyone.

Everyone has times when they are less tolerant - for example, when we are tired, ill, exhausted, overwhelmed with work, anxious, or unhappy. And some of us are naturally more sensitive to noise or other disturbances. What should you do in those situations, when someone is annoying you? You can move away, or you can nicely ask them to be more quiet, or kindly let them know what they are doing is distracting you. Talking about how you feel – such as “I feel annoyed when you do that” might get a better response than telling them what to do, such as “Stop doing that.”

What if they don't agree to be more considerate, what would you do? You could suggest something you can do for them so they are more willing to accommodate your needs. Working out a solution is better than holding in your feelings and then exploding with anger when you can't stand it anymore. For example, what do you think the tree spirit could have said to the tiger and lion? He could have suggested they not leave the animal bones near his tree. And what if they didn't agree? He could have offered to warn them when a hunter is coming if they would avoid leaving the bones near his tree.

What about when others are not tolerant, when they complain? And what if they complain about us? We can't force them to be tolerant or just expect them to be tolerant. Instead, we can be compassionate. Maybe they're having a bad day, or not feeling well. By respecting their need for peace, we can help them feel better. It doesn't mean we have to agree with their belief or point of view, but we can be respectful and compassionate.



## Chapter 10 - THE JACKAL KING (Sabbadātha Jataka)

There was once a holy man who was an advisor to Brahmadata, the king of the big city of Benares and its surrounding kingdom. The holy man would be the Buddha in a future life, so in this life he was a Bodhisattva. He had studied and mastered all the holy scriptures and the eighteen types of knowledge. In addition, he was taught a certain spell, an extremely powerful mantra called “Conquering the World.” This spell could not be taught to anyone unless they first were qualified to receive it and participated in a special secret ceremony. The holy man had a pure mind, full of lovingkindness and compassion, with no selfishness or pride, so he was well qualified. He had received the mantra in a very special ceremony.



One day, the Bodhisattva decided to practice reciting this mantra, so he could learn it by heart. He went to a place where he would be all alone, where no one could hear him reciting it, so there would be no danger of someone learning it without the proper qualifications

and then misusing it for selfish or harmful purposes. Once he found a remote forest that was some distance away from the road, he sat down on a flat rock, and began reciting the mantra.

He wasn't completely alone, however. It so happened that a jackal was resting in a hole nearby. This jackal was very intelligent, because in a past life he too had been a holy man, although not a very pure-minded holy man. Not only was he very clever, he also had learned that very same mantra, “Conquering the World,” in his past life as a holy man. So, when he heard the Bodhisattva recite the mantra, just by hearing it once, he memorized the whole thing.

The Bodhisattva finished practicing, and then stood up, saying, “Surely I have learned it by heart now.”

Then the jackal got up out of his hole and announced, “Ho, holy man! I have learned the spell better than you know it yourself!” And off he ran.

The Bodhisattva, terribly worried that the jackal would use the mantra for selfish or evil purposes, started chasing him. But he was no match for the speedy wild jackal. After following him as fast as he could run, the Bodhisattva couldn’t keep up with the jackal, who ran through vines and bushes in the forest to escape. The Bodhisattva cried out,

“You, jackal, will do a big mischief!” Then to any creature that might hear, he shouted, “Catch him! Catch him!”

But there were no other large animals around to run after him. Once he knew he had escaped, the jackal noticed a female jackal, and gave her a little nip on her body.

She asked, “What is it, sir?”

He asked mysteriously, “Do you know me? Or do you not know me?”

She replied, “I do not know you.” She had never seen him before, and didn’t care to know him; certainly not after he nipped her. She had no interest in whatever he was up to.



Then, he recited the mantra of “Conquering the World,” in a loud and clear voice, so it seemed to echo all through the forest.

Suddenly and unexplainably, the female jackal was fascinated by him. She hadn’t noticed before, but now he seemed so confident, powerful and majestic. She walked over to him and wanted to join him in whatever he was doing. Other animals in the area

reacted in the same way. They were mesmerized by this jackal, and wanted to get to know him. First, other jackals arrived, and then more and more of them arrived, and soon there were several hundred jackals.

Then a big group of elephants approached. A herd of horses that had been grazing in the area trotted up toward the jackal. Even lions and tigers joined the group! And finally, wild pigs and deer, and numerous other four-footed forest creatures came to be part of the growing assembly of animals attracted to the jackal.

The lions and tigers didn't notice the fact that there were many animals that they could eat right in front of them. They were too absorbed in admiring this amazingly powerful jackal. All the animals just wanted to stay near him and be part of his huge group.

They unanimously decided to make him their king. Surely, they thought, they never had such a wonderful king of the jungle as this great leader, the jackal. His name was Sabbadātha, which means All-Fangs. One of the female jackals considered herself extremely fortunate to become his wife.



The animals were so devoted to him that a big strong lion proudly volunteered to let the jackal and his wife ride on his back. Then, two elephants, totally disregarding the fact that lions hunt elephants as prey, offered to carry the lion on their backs so that the jackal and his wife would have a royal seat high above everyone else on the back of the lion. All the animals honored the jackal as they looked up

at him, sitting on the back of the lion with an expression of great authority.

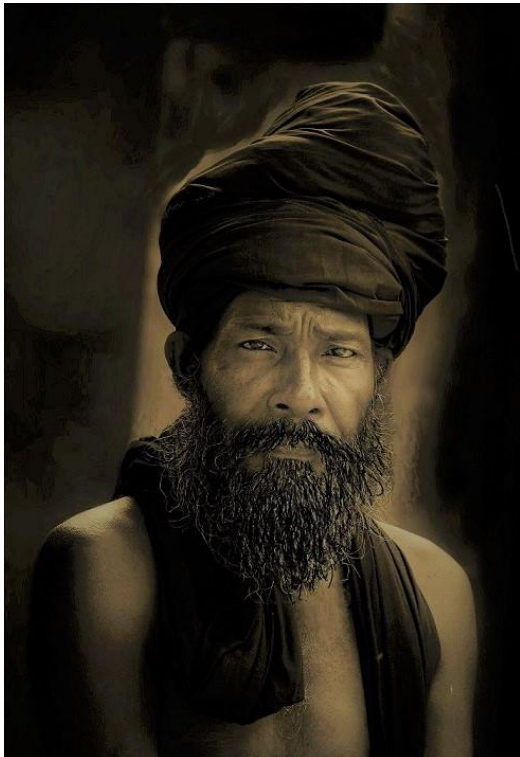
The jackal was enjoying immensely all this admiration showed to him by the many animals, including the mighty lions, tigers and elephants, and he became egoistic, full of pride. He thought,

“I am the king of the jungle now, but I also should become the king of the great kingdom of Benares. And why not? Everyone knows that I am the most intelligent leader in all the land! Everyone should honor me as their leader. The great kingdom of Benares will soon be mine.”

With all the four-footed animals following along, the jackal rode proudly on the back of the lion who stood on the backs of the two elephants, and they proceeded toward Benares. They stopped just outside the city of Benares. There were so many animals that where they stood, they covered a huge area of land. They spread out around the stone wall surrounding the city so the people of Benares would see through the holes in the wall that the jackal king had immense power due to his popularity. He ordered one of his animals to send the message to Brahmadata, the King of Benares:

“Give up your kingdom, or fight for it.”

Word traveled fast – someone with a huge crowd was trying to take over the kingdom! The citizens of Benares panicked. They were full of terror.



The gates to the city were closed and all the citizens stayed within the city walls.

At the palace, the Bodhisattva approached the King of Benares and said, “Fear not, mighty king! Leave me with the task of fighting with the jackal king, Sabbadātha. Except only me, no one is able to fight with him at all.”

The king and the citizens were relieved that the king’s advisor was going to handle this crisis.

The Bodhisattva said, “I will ask the jackal king at once what he will do to take the city.”

Then he went up on top of the tower over one of the city's gates, and shouted out:

“Sabbadātha, what will you do to take over this kingdom?”

The jackal king responded, “I will cause the lions to roar, and with the roaring I will frighten the people. This is how I will take it.”

“Oh, that’s it,” the Bodhisattva thought as he came down from the tower. He made an announcement to all the citizens in the way it was done in those days, by messengers beating drums and walking through the streets, shouting the announcement. The announcement was that all citizens must plug their ears with flour dough. When the citizens heard the command, they all plugged their ears with dough so they couldn’t hear each other speak. They even plugged the ears of their cats and other animals.

Then, the Bodhisattva went a second time up into the tower, and called out, “Sabbadātha!”



The jackal king called out, “What is it, holy man?”

“How will you take the kingdom?” the Bodhisattva asked.

“I will cause the lion to roar, and I will frighten the people, and destroy them, that’s how I will take it!” the jackal king replied.

The Bodhisattva responded, “You will not be able to make the lions roar. These noble lions, with their tawny paws and shaggy manes, will never obey the command of an old jackal like you!”

The jackal, stubborn with pride and ego, answered, “Not only will the other lions obey me, but I’ll even make this one, upon whose back I sit, roar alone!”

“Very well,” said the Bodhisattva, “Do it if you can.”



So the jackal tapped his foot on the lion which he sat upon, to signal him to roar. And the lion, resting his mouth upon the elephant's head, roared three times, without any doubt in the jackal king's command.

The elephants became terrified, and, thinking they were being attacked by a lion, they reared up with their front legs in the air, so the jackal king dropped down at their feet. Then the frightened elephants started stomping with their feet, as they would when attacked, and they

trampled on his head. Then and there, the jackal king died. The elephants, in their fear and confusion, even wounded one another. The other animals stampeded in a panic, and many died. The rest of them ran for their lives into the forest.

The Bodhisattva came down from the tower, and had the gates of the city opened wide. He made an announcement, by messengers beating drums and shouting loudly in the streets,

“Let all the people take the dough out from their ears, and those that would like some meat, let them take all the meat!”

There was plenty of meat for all laying on the ground outside the city gates. The citizens ate all the fresh meat they could eat, and the rest they dried and preserved for later. According to the story, this is the time that people first began to eat dried meat.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Why didn't the Bodhisattva want anyone to hear the special mantra? (so they wouldn't use it for selfish or harmful purposes)
2. What happened when the jackal chanted the mantra? (many animals were attracted to him and made him their king)
3. What happened to the jackal king's personality when so many animals admired him? (he became egoistic, full of pride)
4. How did he intend to take over the kingdom of Benares? (make the lions roar and scare the people of Benares)
5. How did the Bodhisattva prevent the people from getting scared? (made an announcement for them to plug their ears)
6. What happened to the jackal king when the lion roared? (the elephants were scared, reared up and stamped their feet, so the jackal king fell off and was trampled)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION – Abuse of Power:

The jackal king suddenly became extremely popular, and with so many fans who admired him, he had the power to influence others.

Whatever he said, the others would agree and support him.

But he used this power for a selfish reason that would harm others – trying to take over another kingdom.

And what happened when he used his popularity for harmful, selfish purposes? It resulted in disaster, and losing his popularity.

So this story teaches us that if you abuse your popularity – if you use it to harm others – you will lose it. If you abuse it, you lose it.

How do people become popular?

They often have “charisma.”

What is charisma?

It means being charming, able to easily attract many people, or being able to easily influence others.

For example, many politicians, activists, comedians, Hollywood stars, and even “influencers” on social media have charisma.

People who have charisma are bold, confident, entertaining, and know how to get attention and persuade others, so people listen to them and believe them.

But what happens when a famous person does something that harms others, or says something very offensive or insulting to someone?

He gets heavily criticized in the news, and he loses his friends and fans.

He might even lose his job or get arrested,

Many people lose respect for him, so he isn't so popular anymore.

He loses his popularity power when he abuses it.

But does that always happen?

There are some famous people who go on harming others for many years.

There are leaders of countries who oppress certain groups of people, cause terrible human rights abuses, and start wars.

There are powerful terrorist organizations that don't seem to disappear.

Do these people abuse but never lose their power?

No, they eventually lose it, and eventually they suffer the results of their negative karma.

But it might take many years, or sometimes it happens in a future life.

Why don't they immediately lose all their friends and supporters when they do wrong?

Because they have many people who admire and support them, who like their charisma and power and don't realize or care that the person is causing harm to others. So they continue in power.

Could you be admiring or supporting someone who is abusing their power – their popularity or charisma – to cause harm?

One possibility is online. Do you know any popular stars or “influencers” on social media - YouTube, Facebook, Instagram or Tik Tok?

Some of them may have a good influence or a neutral influence (neither good nor bad). But there are some who are so motivated by desire for popularity, admiration, “likes” or money that they say and do things that are very daring, inappropriate, bad or nasty to get attention (more clicks), because that's what attracts the most people.



They spread their negative thoughts and ideas to those who watch them. If we click on their social media, we are helping to support and encourage them to continue spreading their bad influence.

Another possibility is a friend. Do you have a friend who is popular? What if he or she starts acting unkind or disrespectful, or starts using others, or starts acting like a bully?

If you spend time with them, then it may seem like you are encouraging their negative behavior, supporting their misbehavior.

What should you do? You can say something to let them know you don't like that behavior. Or you could avoid them.

When someone is popular, it doesn't mean it's okay to follow their ideas or behavior.

Remember, what is popular is not always right, and what is right is not always popular.

And, remember not to blindly follow someone like the animals in the story blindly followed the jackal king.

## Chapter 11 - THE WOODPECKER AND THE LION (Javasakuna Jataka)

A very long time ago, in the area of the Himalayan mountains of India, there was a woodpecker who was destined to be the Buddha in a future life. One day, the woodpecker was perched on a tree, looking for food. In particular, he was looking for insects or insect larvae that burrow into the tree bark.



He heard an unusual sound and looked down toward the ground. The sound seemed to be coming from a large animal down below. He saw that it was a lion. But the lion was acting strangely. He was coughing and moving his mouth around as if he was trying to get something out. He threw his head back and forth, and side to side, and seemed desperate to get something out of his mouth. He moaned and seemed to be in great pain.

The woodpecker called out to him, “Friend, what’s upsetting you?”



Taking long, slow loud breaths, the lion said, with difficulty, “I was eating my prey, chewing on some bones, and a piece of bone stuck in my throat. I can’t get it out and I can’t swallow it. My throat swelled up and it hurts terribly. And now I can’t eat anything.”

The woodpecker immediately felt compassion for the lion, and wanted to relieve him of his pain. With his long, thin beak, the woodpecker thought, he should be able to pick a bone splinter out from someone’s throat. However, he would have to put his head deep inside the mouth of a big lion with long sharp fangs and huge jaws that could easily snap shut on a little bird like him and eat him.

The woodpecker said, "I would take the bone out of your throat, friend, but I dare not put my head into your mouth because I fear you would eat me up!"

The lion needed help or he might die. He said, "Don't be afraid, little friend. I will not eat you up. Just please save my life."

"All right," said the bird, "Lie down on your side."

The woodpecker didn't trust the lion, however. He thought, "Who knows what this guy might do?"

He had an idea. He could prop open the lion's mouth with a stick and then enter the lion's mouth to remove the bone. So, he found a stick of the right size and said, "Now please open your mouth wide."



The lion opened his mouth like he was yawning, and the woodpecker quickly pushed the stick into the lion's mouth between his upper and lower jaw. Now the lion wouldn't be able to bite down and eat him.

Then the woodpecker put his head in the lion's mouth and poked his beak down into his throat. With his beak, he felt the splinter of bone and struck the end of it, so it fell out. The woodpecker pulled his head out from the lion's mouth, and then with his beak he knocked out the stick so the lion

could close his mouth again. He hopped away and perched safely on the top of a tree.

The lion was so relieved that he could eat again and wouldn't starve to death. His throat started to heal, the pain disappeared and he felt much better.

One day, he had hunted a wild buffalo and was happily dining on the buffalo's body, when the woodpecker flew to a tree nearby.

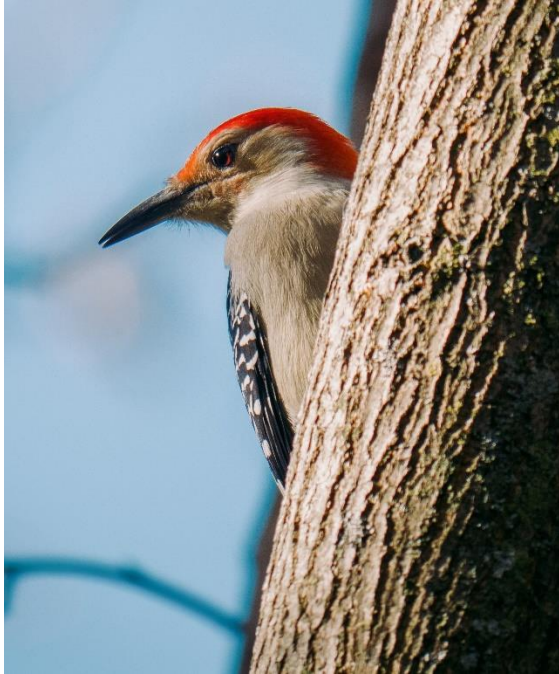


The woodpecker thought, "I wonder whether the lion has learned anything about kindness after I showed my kindness and compassion to him. Will he be grateful to me after what I have done for him? I will now put him to the test."

He perched on a branch high above the lion, greeted him, and started a friendly conversation. Then he said,

"I once showed a kindness to you. In turn, I ask you, would you do a small favor for me?"

The lion had no interest in doing favors for others. He replied, "For you to be able to trust your head to a lion's jaws, for you to do such a daring deed and to still be alive – and the fact that I didn't eat you - is showing you enough of my kindness."



The woodpecker said aloud for all to hear what he had learned,

“From someone who is ungrateful, don’t hope to receive something in return for your generosity, for your good deed. Don’t have bitter thoughts toward him, and don’t speak any angry words. Perhaps you can just stay away from him.”

Then the woodpecker flew away.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Why was the lion in pain? (he had a bone stuck in his throat)
2. What was the first feeling the woodpecker had toward the lion when he heard that he was in pain? (compassion)
3. What did the woodpecker want to do immediately when he heard the lion was in pain? (remove the bone from his throat)
4. Did the lion thank the woodpecker for helping him? (no)
5. In return for his generosity, what did the woodpecker ask the lion for? (a small favor)
6. How would you describe the lion’s attitude toward the woodpecker? (ungrateful, uncaring, not generous)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION – Generosity and Gratitude:

The woodpecker was generous.

He didn't give the lion a gift, but he gave his service, his help.

Generosity isn't only giving someone an object, like food, a gift, or money, but it also includes giving someone your time, your help, doing something for them, sharing what you have.

It's the opposite of being stingy - not wanting to share or give, thinking "it's mine," "it's my free time," or "I want to keep it for myself."

Many people are generous, for different reasons.

Can you think of some reasons?

Because they want others to like them, be friendly with them, or approve of them.

Another reason is that others might help them in return.

This is like a trade, trading favors. If I do this for you, then you should do something for me in return.

For example, if I go to your party, then you should come to my party.

If I help you with this, then you should help me with that.

The woodpecker wasn't generous for those reasons.

When he heard the lion was in pain, the woodpecker's first thought was what? Compassion for the lion.

The next thought he was, how he could help the lion.

So, the woodpecker was generous because of his feeling of compassion.

This was true generosity - giving without any expectation of reward.

It shows he had a good heart, that he immediately thought of what?

Compassion and what he could do to help.

And he was also wisely cautious, to think about the danger, and how to avoid the danger.

Later, the woodpecker later wanted to test the lion.

What did he want to find out? Whether the lion was grateful for what the woodpecker had done for him.

Similarly, when we give something or do something kind for someone, we often want to know whether the person appreciated it, whether they like it, whether they are grateful.

We might expect the person to say "thank you" or smile.

Then we end up smiling at each other.

But what if we expect them to smile or say “thank you” and they don’t?  
How would you feel?

What if you went out of your way to do something special for them or spent your money for them, and they don’t even say “thank you” or smile?

Of what if you did something kind to them and they didn’t do something kind to you in return?

You might feel disappointed or even angry that they didn’t appreciate it. They might seem rude, uncaring, ungrateful – like the lion in the story.

At the end of the story, the woodpecker taught us that if that happens, not to have negative or angry thoughts.

But how can we avoid feeling upset when someone is ungrateful?

The woodpecker advised, “don’t hope to receive something in return for your generosity, for your good deed.”

If you don’t expect anything - not even a “thank you” or smile in response to our kindness - then will you get disappointed or upset? No.

You know that you did something kind, and that it was the right thing to do. So, you avoid having negative or angry thoughts.

It’s better to give without any hope or expectation at all.

Then we are giving with a pure heart – purely out of kindness, with no thought of reward, “with no strings attached,” with no attachments, with no conditions - unconditionally.

For example, when you give someone a birthday gift, you don’t think about whether they will give you a gift for your birthday.

When you help someone clean up, you don’t expect them to return the favor and help you do something.

When you share some of your food, you don’t hope they will share something with you.

When you do a favor for someone, you don’t expect... what?

You don’t expect them to do something for you.

That’s how you give with a pure heart.

## Chapter 12 - THE DEATH OF THE KING (Dasaratha Jataka)

This is a story very similar to a very famous Hindu story from India called the Ramāyana, but there are some differences. This is the version of the story as passed down through time from the Buddha.

Thousands of years ago, there was a well-known and good king named Dasaratha. As was typical in those days for kings, he had more than one wife. With his first queen he had two sons and a daughter. The oldest son, who was very wise even as a child, was named Rama and the second was named Lakshman. The daughter's name was Sita. The three children and their mother were very dear to the king.

After some time, the first queen passed away. King Dasaratha for a long time was crushed by sorrow. But one day, another one of his wives gave birth to a son, who was named Bharatha. King Dasaratha loved the queen and their son very much, and one day he said to her,

“Dear lady, I will grant you a wish. Choose a wish and I will grant it.”



She accepted his offer, but wanted to choose her wish later on. Years later, when her son was seven years old, she decided to tell the king what she wanted. Making sure she had his full attention, she said,

“My lord, you promised you would grant a wish for my son. Will you give it to me now?”

He replied, “Choose a wish, my lady.”

She said clearly and assertively, “My lord, give my son the kingdom.”

This was an extremely bold request. Rama, the eldest son, was the crown-prince, the next ruler when the king retires



or passes away. Everyone admired the loving and wise Rama, and he surely would become a wonderful king.

The king in anger snapped his fingers at her and said, “Get out, you terrible woman! My other two sons shine like blazing fires – would you kill them, and ask for the kingdom for a son of yours?”

She fled in terror to her magnificent room in the palace. But, determined to get her wish, she waited until days later, when she felt the king may have calmed down. She asked again for her son be the next king.

King Dasaratha definitely did not want to grant her this wish, but he was worried that she wouldn't just take “no” for an answer. She had nothing to lose and everything to gain if her son became king - she would be the proud mother of the new king and have a higher status, and her son would have all the power to protect her. She might even try to get rid of his other two sons so her son could be king. He thought to himself, “She is ungrateful and treacherous. This woman might use a forged letter or a treacherous bribe to get my sons murdered.”

So he called for his two older sons, Rama and Lakshman, and told them all about it, and in conclusion, he said:

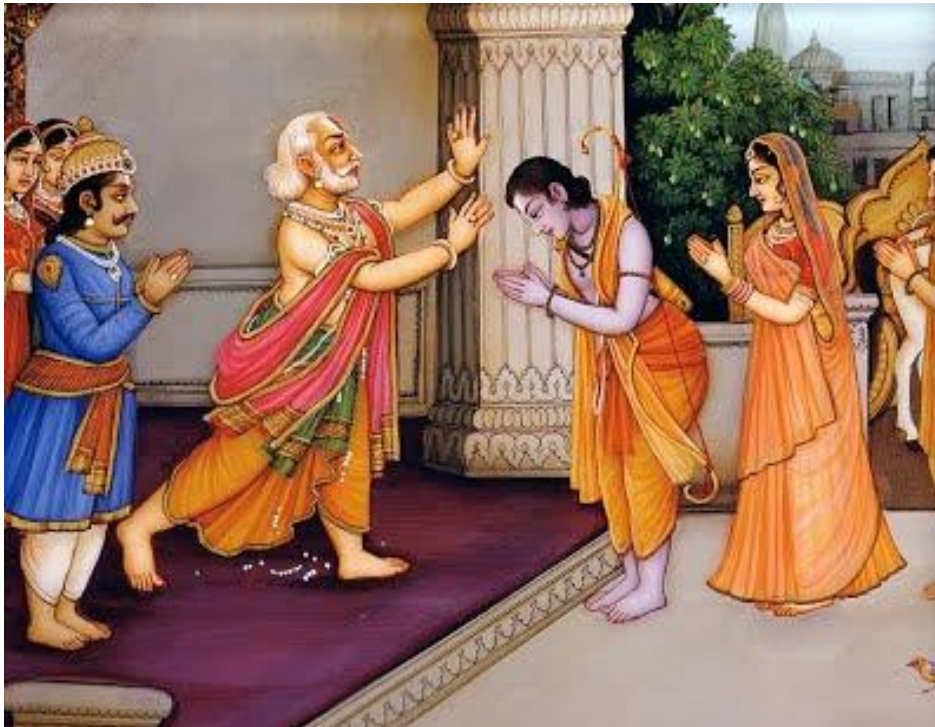


“My sons, if you live here, some disaster may happen to you. Go to some neighboring kingdom, or to some forest, and when I die and my body is burnt, then return and inherit the kingdom which belongs to your family.”

He wanted to be able to tell his sons how long he would live, so they would know when they should come back to the palace - at his time of death. So, he invited to the palace people who had psychic powers, and asked them to look into his future and tell him how long he will live. They told him that he would live twelve more years.

He talked with his sons and told them, "Now, my sons, after twelve years, you must return and take on the responsibilities of royalty."

Rama and Lakshman loved their father dearly and didn't want to leave, but also respected his wish that they stay away. They promised to go away to a forest and then come back after twelve years.



They prepared to leave, and sadly said goodbye to everyone, including their father. Sita decided to go with them, and she wept as she said goodbye to her father. Then she joined Rama and Lakshman as they left the palace.

They brought almost nothing with them except bows and arrows. They left their elaborate royal clothing and jewelry behind, and dressed in simple clothes for living as yogis in the forest.

Word traveled fast in the kingdom, and soon a large crowd gathered near the palace to see the last glimpse of their dear princes and princess for several years.



The three traveled until they came near the great Himalayas, the huge snowy mountains of India. They found a place by a river and near many fruit trees so they could easily find food. They built a simple hut to live in, like yogis who lived in the Himalayas.

Lakshman said to Rama, “You are like a father to us, so you should remain in the hut and we will bring wild fruit and feed you.” He agreed, and Lakshman and Sita brought fruit for him to eat. They lived there, surviving on wild fruits for several years.

Meanwhile, back at the palace, King Dasaratha missed his children so much that he died after only nine years. After his funeral was performed, his queen gave orders that the king’s umbrella should be raised over her son, Bharatha. She meant that he now should become the king, as an umbrella is held over a king whenever he goes outside the palace. But the palace advisors wouldn’t allow it. They would follow the rule and intent of King Dasaratha that the eldest prince becomes the new king. They said,

“The lords of the umbrella are living in the forest.”

Prince Bharatha was kind-hearted and virtuous, not selfish and power hungry like his mother. He said, “I will bring back my brother Rama from the forest and raise the royal umbrella over him.”

He took the five symbols of royalty: a sword, umbrella, crown, royal sandals and fan, and the property of a king - war elephants, chariots and soldiers – and went along with the palace advisors to offer them to his older brother, Rama. When they were close to the hut where his brothers and Sita were living, he had everyone set up camp. Then he went with a few of the palace advisors to the hut at a time when Lakshman and Sita were away in the forest.



Rama sat at the door of the hut - noble, still, and at peace, like a statue made of gold. Bharatha approached and greeted him, and then told him of all that had happened in the kingdom, including the death of their dear father. He fell at the feet of Rama, bursting into tears of grief. The advisors also started weeping, deeply missing the good king who was so caring and close to them.

But Rama didn't shed any tears and didn't even look sad. He just looked serious and peaceful. With a few deep, sobbing breaths, Bharatha finished crying and sat down. Toward evening, Lakshman and Sita were on their way returning to the hut with fruits to eat, and Rama thought,

"These two are young and haven't yet developed deep understanding and wisdom. If they are told all of a sudden that our father is dead, the pain will be greater than they can bear, and who knows – their hearts may break. I will persuade them to go down into the pond, and then find a way of letting them know the truth." The pond's cool water would calm them in their grief.



He pointed to the pond nearby and said to them as they approached,

"You have been out too long. Let this be your punishment – go into the pond and stand there."

Without any question, Lakshman and Sita went into the pond and stood there. Then he told them the news:

"Bharatha says that King Dasaratha's life is at an end."

When they heard the news of their father's death, they fainted with shock and grief. When they were conscious again, he repeated it, and they fainted again. After he told them and they fainted a third time, the palace advisors lifted them up out of the pond and set them on the dry ground. Then Lakshman, Sita and the advisors all cried and wailed in grief together.

Bharatha thought, “My brother Prince Lakshman and my sister Lady Sita can’t control their grief when they hear of our father’s death, but Rama doesn’t cry out or weep. I wonder, what can be the reason that he doesn’t feel any grief? I will ask him.”

He asked Rama, “Tell me, by what power do you not grieve, when you should have grief? Though I have told you that your father is dead, grief doesn’t overwhelm you?”

Rama explained the reason that he felt no grief. He said, “When you never can keep anything, though you may cry loudly, why should you torment yourself? One who is young, older, wise, rich or poor—everyone will die. As sure as a ripe fruit will fall from a tree, a person will have to die.

“A person seen in the morning may be gone by evening, and a person seen in the evening may be gone by the morning. By crying and tormenting yourself, you become pale and thin, but it doesn’t bring the dead back to life. Tears won’t bring them to you.

“One being dies, and then another being is born to family and friends. Each creature’s happiness depends on those beings he is attached to.



“The strong person, therefore, who learns the Dharma, carefully contemplates this world and the next world, so he isn’t upset in his mind or heart.

“So, I give and take care of my family and friends. I will take care of all those who are left behind. This is what a wise man does.”

When everyone heard this explanation of impermanence, their grief disappeared. Prince Bharatha bowed to his brother Rama and begged him to return to the palace and rule the kingdom.

But Rama said, "Brother, take Lakshman and Sita with you, and rule the kingdom yourselves."

Bharatha said, "No, my lord, you take it!"

Rama replied, "Brother, my father commanded me to receive the kingdom at the end of twelve years. If I go now, I won't be carrying out what he wanted. After three years I will come."

Bharatha wondered, "Who will rule the kingdom during all that time?"

Rama said, "You do it."

Bharatha refused, "I will not."

Rama had an idea. "Then until I come, these sandals shall rule the kingdom." Taking off his sandals made of straw, he gave them to Bharatha. Then the two younger brothers and Sita took the sandals, and saying goodbye to Rama, they went back to the palace with the advisors, soldiers, and all they had brought with them.

The sandals, which represented Rama, were placed by the advisors on the royal throne. When decisions had to be made for the kingdom, they looked at the sandals, and if their decision was wrong, the sandals moved. When their decision was correct, the sandals lay quiet.

After the sandals remained there for three years, Rama returned from the forest and entered the park near the palace. Prince Bharatha and Prince Lakshman heard that he arrived, and with a crowd of people they proceeded to the park to welcome their brother. They performed a grand ceremony to welcome him as their new king. Then he entered the city on a magnificent chariot and entered the palace to rule as the great King Rama.

After the Buddha told this story, he said that his father, King Suddhōdana had been King Dasaratha in a past life, his mother had been Sita in a past life, his great devotee and assistant Venerable Ananda had been Bharatha, and he had been Rama.

## QUESTIONS:

1. What wish did the queen, Bharatha's mother, ask from the king? (for her son to be the next king)
2. Why did the king tell his sons Rama and Lakshman to go to the forest for 12 years? (to protect them from getting killed)
3. Why did he say they must stay away for 12 years? (the king would die after 12 years)
4. Why did King Dasaratha die after only nine years? (he missed his children)
5. How did Rama react when Bharatha told him their father died? (he was serious and peaceful, and didn't cry)
6. How did Lakshman and Sita react when Rama told them their father died? (they fainted three times and then cried)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION: Death and grief:

Have you ever experienced the death of a loved one - a close family member, relative, or pet?

Almost everyone at some point will experience death of a loved one. Even if you haven't experienced it, you can help others if you have an idea of what to say to comfort them through their grief.

Grief can feel not only like sadness, but also like loneliness, feeling left behind, or feeling regret you didn't do more to save or help the loved one.

We might feel okay sometimes, but other times we might cry, feel depressed, or feel uninterested in things that used to interest us.

It's a process of healing that takes time, like the healing of a wound.

Anytime you feel overwhelmed with emotions, try practicing mindfulness. Close your eyes and be aware only of what you are experiencing this very moment. Notice anything you hear, and whatever you feel in or on your body - your eyelids on your eyes, clothes on your skin, fingers and toes touching each other, movement of the chest and belly as you breathe. You can also do some long, slow gentle breathing to feel more peaceful.

It's best not to just ignore, deny or push aside your feelings.  
It helps to share your feelings with others.  
It helps us to heal, and not be overwhelmed with grief, if we remember what Rama taught in the story.  
He pointed out that a person is strong when he learns the Dharma and thinks about this world and the next world.  
Just as birth is part of life, death is part of life.  
There's a beginning of life when we're born into the body, an in-between while we are living in the body, and an end of life when we leave the body.  
And then we are in the bardo, which is between one life and the next life.  
And then we are born into a new life, on earth or in a heaven-world, and on and on, we leave one life and go to another,  
When our body gets too old, or ill or injured, it's time to change the body, just like changing clothes.  
When do you change your clothes? When they are too old, dirty or torn.  
When we die, we get a fresh new body, like fresh new clothes.  
When we are born it's like walking into a room, and we stay there for a while, and we walk out when we die, changing our clothes (our body), and then we walk into another room where we live the next life.  
So, our loved one isn't gone, we just can't see him or her.  
She or he is getting ready for a new birth, or is born into the next life.  
For every being who we love, we enjoy them for some unknown length of time, but there will be a day when we must say goodbye.

Rama mentioned that death may be sudden and unexpected – everything is okay and then by evening or morning, they pass away.  
Some humans and animals have a short life - they stay in that body only for a little while. We don't know why they leave us so soon, and it might seem very sad or unfair that they died so young.  
But causes and conditions brought you together, and causes and conditions brought you apart at the time they died.  
Maybe they were close to you and died unexpectedly so you would learn about death and impermanence, because it was the right time for you to learn this, although it's so painful for you.  
You can look at it in a positive way by thinking that you were fortunate that they gave you love and affection, but then they had to leave because it was their time to take their next birth, in a precious human life or heaven world.  
A pet will now be in a better situation, especially if he is born as a human rather than an animal, because a human can earn merit and gain wisdom, which leads to real happiness and Enlightenment.



You may wonder if the loved one will see you and recognize you again in his next birth. He probably wouldn't remember his past life, but if you see him in a new body, you might feel a familiar kindness with each other. It's best not to be overly attached to a particular being; instead, be attached to the kindness of a being, knowing there are countless other kind beings.

Rama pointed out that crying, letting yourself be miserable, doesn't bring back our loved one.

It's okay to cry, express our feelings, but when we let ourselves cry on and on, we are dwelling on our sad thoughts too much and stressing out our body, wasting our energy. As he said, our body becomes thin and pale. How would your loved one feel if they see you crying so much? He wouldn't want you to be miserable, stressing your body. Instead, he'd want you to do activities that are healing and good for you. For example, you could go to a temple to feel more peaceful.

It's helpful to make a little shrine with candles or butter lamps, a picture and belongings of your loved one, or a written prayer for him. Make that a place to celebrate his life, offer merits, and thank him for being a part of your life. You can help your loved one by praying and offering merits so they have a good rebirth - a healthy precious human birth. And as Rama suggested, we should help others, which earns merit, and then we can dedicate it to our loved one that passed away.

Is there anything we can learn from experiencing grief?

Also, when someone we love dies, then we can really understand sadness. If we don't experience it ourselves, then we can't have true compassion for others who are experiencing sadness.

When we think about death and dying, we think about impermanence, and also about suffering, and about how precious life is.

We might also think about karma, cause and effect – the good karma that your loved one has that will cause him to have a good rebirth as a human or in a heaven-world.

These are the Four Thoughts that turn our mind toward the Dharma! So, grief helps us practice Dharma and reach happiness and Enlightenment!

We also learn how important it is to show your love and appreciation for your loved ones while they are alive, because one day they will be gone. We don't want to regret that we didn't pay enough attention to them.

## Chapter 13 - THE FISH AND HIS FRIEND (Maccha Jataka)



A long, long time ago, there was a man who was a wise advisor to a powerful king in India, and this advisor had a very special skill. He could understand what animals were thinking, and he could speak to animals and they would understand him.

One day, the king's advisor traveled up the river in a small boat, slowly paddling along.



He saw the local fishermen who were going out to the river with their nets to catch fish.

They depended on catching fish to feed their families and to sell at the market.

The king's advisor looked deep into the clear river water. He could see many fish swimming around.

One fish looked especially beautiful. He was very colorful, shiny bright blue with purple down the sides. It was surrounded by several other fish, who followed wherever he swam. He appeared to be their leader.



The other fish were always watching the blue fish, and never strayed too far away from him. He seemed to be quite popular!

There was one fish, with many dark spots, who followed especially close to the blue fish.

Everywhere the blue fish swam, the spotted fish followed right behind. His eyes were always looking at the blue fish. When the blue fish swam close to the surface and flipped his body around in the air to dive back down, the spotted fish did exactly the same thing.



The spotted fish was watching the blue fish so much that he didn't pay much attention to any of the other fish around him.

He was fascinated by his friend, the blue fish, who was entertaining and knew so many interesting things.

The blue fish knew where to find the most delicious tiny fish and insect larvae to eat. He led the other fish, his followers, to a place where tall grasses and reeds grew in the shallow water. There the fish hid from each other and played joyfully together.



He showed the other fish some other shallow areas of the river where the frog eggs would hatch into little tadpoles. And he showed his friends where the tadpoles went when they developed legs and began to jump out of the river onto the land.

The parents of the spotted fish warned him that it was dangerous to go in the shallow water, where large birds swoop down and grab fish out of the water, and where crocodiles catch fish in their big powerful jaws. But he didn't want to pay attention to their advice; he just wanted to have fun with his friend!



A little further down the river, the fishermen were casting nets into the water.

The blue fish swam down the river and right up toward the net, brave and curious about what it was. The spotted fish was right behind him.



The blue fish noticed that the net seemed somehow strange, not like something that naturally is in the river, so he suddenly swam away from it.

But the spotted fish was daydreaming, wondering where they would go together later.

He was thinking that maybe they would go see the tadpoles. So, he didn't notice the danger of the net, and didn't swim away as the blue fish did.

He felt the net rub against his scales, and soon he realized that he was trapped in the net.

The fishermen saw that they had caught some fish in their net, so they pulled it out of the water and onto the shore. One of them saw the spotted fish, pulled him out of the net, and set him on the ground, saying,

“We can cook this one on the coals and eat it.”

He sharpened a stick, preparing to poke it through the fish and roast him over a fire. Then the fishermen went to gather firewood.



The spotted fish couldn't get any water to breathe through his gills. His mouth opened and closed, trying to pull in water that he needed to survive.

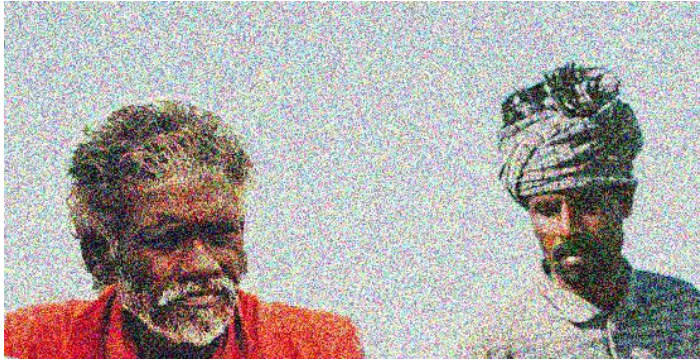
He desperately flopped around and tried to flop himself back into the river. He flopped and flopped, but he could not get back to the water. He was in agony.

The king's advisor got out of his boat and walked over to where the spotted fish was wriggling and gasping for water. He understood that the fish was communicating – he was saying,

“It's not the fire that scares me or the stick they would poke through me. But it's the thought of my friend! Oh where did my friend go? Where is he? I need to find him! Oh fishermen, free me again, let me go free!”

The advisor thought, “This fish is so miserable because he is blindly loyal to his friend. If he dies here with his agony and desire to find his friend, then he will suffer terribly in his next life. So, I must save him.”

The advisor walked up to one of the fishermen and said,



“Friend, you have never given the king a special fish. Today will you give us a special fish?”

The fishermen replied

“Certainly! Please take any ones you want.”

The advisor picked up the spotted fish in his hands, and said, “This one looks delicious.”



Then the advisor looked into the poor suffering fish’s eyes, and said,

“You are so foolish! If I did not see you, you would have been killed. Your blind loyalty to your friend is making you suffer so much! Don’t get trapped by your attachments!”

The advisor tenderly put the spotted fish back into the river when the fishermen were not looking.

The fish realized how fortunate he was, that the good man saved him.

He thankfully pumped the fresh cool water through his gills and swam deep into the river, happy to be alive.



## QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the spotted fish like the blue fish so much? (he was fun, entertaining, and knew many interesting things)
2. What did the spotted fish's parents warn him about? (the shallow water is too risky, with birds and crocodiles that eat fish)
3. What happened when they got near the net? (the blue fish swam away but the spotted fish got caught in the net)
4. What was he thinking about when he was caught? (where they would go later, maybe to see the tadpoles)
5. What was the spotted fish thinking about when he was gasping for water? (his friend)
6. Why did the advisor ask the fishermen for a fish? (he wanted to save the fish)
7. What would happen in his next life if the spotted fish dies in agony and desire to be with his friend? (he will suffer in his next life)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION – Blind Loyalty:

The king's advisor told the fish that his blind loyalty to his friend is making him suffer so much.

What is "blind loyalty"?

First, it means being loyal to someone – believing and following what they say, helping them, joining in and supporting whatever they do, being there for them, not abandoning or disappointing them.

Loyalty is often a good thing, such as being loyal to a good friend, brother or sister.

But "blind loyalty" is not a good thing.

It means being so loyal, it's as if you are blind – you can't see anything wrong in what they say or do. It means being too much of a follower.

So you believe them without question, you do what they want without thinking enough about whether it's the right thing to do.

It seems a bit ridiculous – who would behave like that?

Actually, many adults do!

For example, followers of cult leaders, supporters of politicians, and fans of sports stars and music superstars.

People who have blind loyalty think the person is so cool – usually because of the person’s power, talent, beauty, personality or charisma. Do you know what the word “charisma” means? It means being charming, having the ability to influence others, having a persuasive personality.

They admire the person so much that they want to be like them - be part of their group, act or talk like they do, or follow what they do - without considering carefully whether it’s a good idea or not.

Similarly, in the story, the spotted fish followed and imitated what the blue fish.

And what happened to the spotted fish as a result? Big trouble! He got caught.

So, we see that being too much of a follower is dangerous.

Do you think, “I would never be too much of a follower!”

Most of us don’t think so. But many of us, sooner or later, encounter someone who we admire, or who has some influence over us, and we may not realize how much we have become a follower.

Maybe you just want a certain friend to like you, and you don’t notice whether you are becoming too much of a follower.

You do what they like to do, talk or behave a bit the way they do.

You feel tempted or pressured to do something you wouldn’t normally do, or they may dare you to do something.

Has that ever happened to you? Or have you seen someone else do that?

And if their behavior isn’t as good as yours, you might not notice, but your behavior starts to get worse.

What are some ways our behavior could get worse? Using unkind words, being disrespectful or dishonest, showing off, being aggressive or selfish.

The king’s advisor in the story warned the spotted fish not to get trapped, not to get in trouble from his “attachments.”

What are “attachments”? Things we want, things we are attached to.

We get trapped by them when we want them so much that it causes problems.



It happens when you want so much for a friend to like you, you are so concerned about pleasing the friend, that you only think about what the friend wants, and you get careless - you don't use your common sense. Like the spotted fish, you might go somewhere dangerous, or get in trouble because of what your friend wants to do.

Not only kids, but many adults make this mistake!

Could that happen to you?

Were you ever so focused on a friend that you forgot about something else that was important? Or ignored someone else, or hurt their feelings?

Remember that you are extremely lucky to have parents who want you to learn the Dharma, and that your friend may not be so lucky – they may not have learned how to behave with the good values as you have.

So, instead of blindly following a friend into negative behavior or trouble, remember the story of the spotted fish following the blue fish, be mindful of what you are doing, and be aware of the danger of getting trapped by our attachments, and being too much of a follower.

## Chapter 14 - 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,

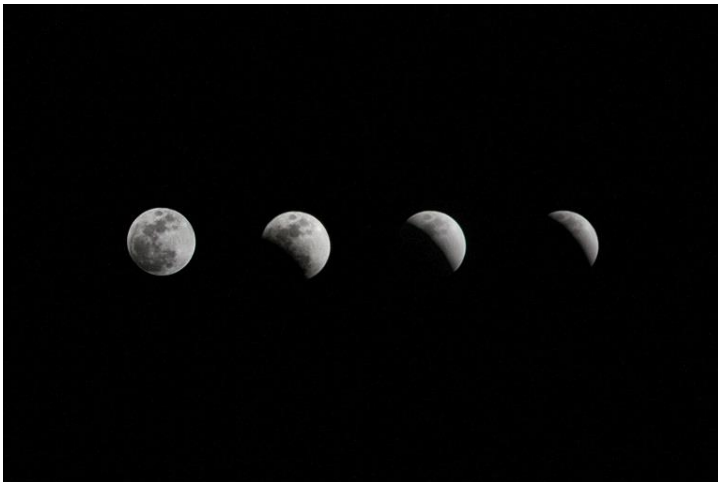
“The weather is getting colder. So that means that the moon must be getting smaller each day. In a few days we won’t see it anymore.”



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!”

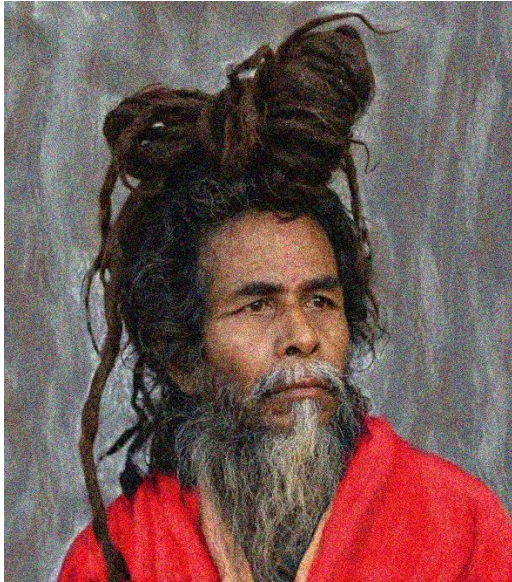


The tiger and the lion were feeling more and more angry, because they each had insulted the other.

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)
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 – 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.

## Chapter 15 - THE MONKEY BRIDGE (Mahakapi Jataka)



There was once a big, strong monkey who was very kind and also very wise. He was the leader of a huge group of thousands of monkeys, so he was called the king of the monkeys, or the monkey king.

This group of monkeys lived by a river where there was a big mango tree with the sweetest, most tasty mangoes. The monkeys often went to the tree to eat the wonderful mangoes.



One day while eating the fruit with a group of monkeys, the monkey king noticed that one of the branches of the tree hung over the river, so some of the mangoes fell into the water. He thought,

“Someday danger will come upon us because the fruit of this tree is falling into the water.”

He knew that the mangoes might float downstream where someone else might find out how sweet they are and want to have more of them. The monkey king told his group of monkeys to eat or throw down all of the flowers that grow on the branch that spread out over the river, so that no fruits would develop from the flowers that grow on that branch.

But one day, one ripe fruit did fall into the river. It floated all the way down the river to where a king was swimming. Some fishermen had put two nets across the river so the king could have his own special pool to swim, in between the nets. The mango got caught in the net.



When the king was finished swimming and the fishermen pulled the net out of the river, they found the mango in the net and, not knowing what it was,

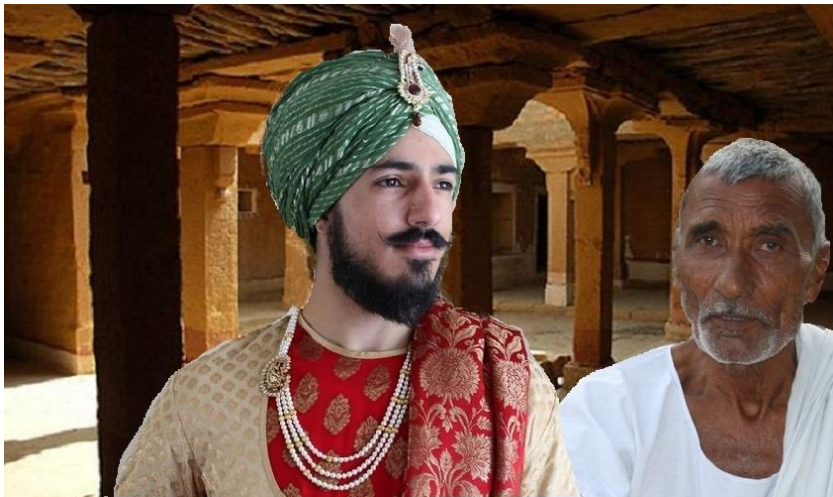
they showed it to the king.

He asked them, "What is this fruit?"

One of the fishermen said, "We don't know, sire."

The king said, "Well, who would know?"

The fisherman said, "The men who cut wood in the forest. They know all about trees and fruits"



So the king had some woodcutters called to his palace. He asked them,

"What is this fruit?"

One of them said, "It is a mango, sire."

The king cut it with a knife and said, "Here, try it. See what it tastes like"

They did, and they said "It is delicious!"

The king ate some, and gave some to his advisors. He was shocked at how sweet and tasty it was, with a sweetness that seemed to fill his whole body. He had never eaten anything like it! He decided he must have more.

He asked the woodcutters where the tree is that made that wonderful fruit. The woodcutters told him that it must have grown on the riverbank near the Himalayan mountains.



The king ordered them to make several rafts for him, a big group of his men, and the woodcutters to paddle up the river so they could find the tree that had dropped that fruit into the water.

As they paddled up the river, the woodcutters looked carefully for a big healthy

mango tree with a branch hanging over the water, and finally, after several days of traveling, they found it.

One of the woodcutters pointed it out to the king, saying, “Sire, there is the tree.”

The king ordered them to stop paddling, and he and his group of men got off the rafts, waded to the riverbank, and admired the big tree and its plentiful fruits. The king ordered his men to arrange some blankets for him to sleep under the tree for the night, and after he had eaten some of the delightfully sweet fruits, he lay down in the bed they had arranged. His men built a warm fire, and at each side of the bed, a man stood guard while the king slept. But his men were tired after the long journey, and they all soon fell asleep after the sun went down.

While they slept, early in the morning just before sunrise the big group of monkeys walked from branch to branch on the mango tree, picking and eating the fruits.

As the sun rose, the king woke up and saw monkeys all over the mango tree. He thought, “They’re going to eat all the mangoes!”

Shouting to wake up his men, he ordered them,



“Surround these monkeys that eat the mangoes so they can’t escape, and shoot them! Tomorrow we can eat mangoes with monkey meat.”

His men obeyed, surrounding the mango tree with arrows in their bows, ready to shoot the monkeys.



The monkeys ran to the monkey king, saying,

“They are standing around the tree saying they will shoot us! What are we to do?”

They were shaking with fear. The monkey king said, “Don’t worry, I’ll save you.”

He looked across the river, knowing that was their only escape from the king and his men. He thought about how they could get across the river. It was so deep and wide that they couldn’t jump across it.



So he ran way out to the end of a branch that spread out over the river, made a huge jump using all his strength to get across to the other side of the river, and landed on a bush on the riverbank.

He estimated how long his jump was, and then cut a bamboo plant at the base of its stem and stripped off the hard wood so he had a rope-like strip of bamboo fiber.

He saw that it was as long as his jump over the river plus enough length to tie the end to the mango tree, so the monkeys would be able to escape by walking over the river on a rope-like bridge made of the bamboo fiber. He tied one end of the bamboo to a tree on that side of the river, and the other end he tied around his waist. Then he made an enormously long jump back to the other side of the river.



But the bamboo was a bit too short! He hadn't taken into account the length that was tied around his waist. He reached way out and grabbed a tree root. Hanging firmly onto the root, he told the monkeys,

“Go quickly and with good luck, walking over my back and along the bamboo rope to cross over the river.”



The monkeys lined up along the riverbank. One by one, they asked permission to step on his back before quickly walking along his back and then along

the bamboo to get safely to the other side of the river.



One monkey stood near the monkey king, and watched each monkey go across. In a future life as a human, he would be named Devadatta, so we will refer to him in this life also as Devadatta. He had critical thoughts about each monkey who crossed over the monkey king's back.

Seeing a mother carrying her babies as she crossed over, he thought,



“All those babies! Why is she carrying them? They should walk by themselves!”

When she asked permission to cross over, the monkey king welcomed them, saying,

“Hold tight, little ones! Your mother will get you across safely”



Next in line was a monkey who was shy and afraid.

Devadatta was thinking that the shy monkey wasn't important as others, so he should wait until after others go across.

The monkey king looked at the shy monkey with great love and tenderness, and said,

“Don't worry, step on my back and come across, you'll be safe.”

Hundreds of monkeys walked over the monkey king's back, one by one. The monkey king's arms and hands ached and cramped from gripping onto the root, and his back got very sore from the weight of all those monkeys stepping on him.



When a big strong monkey stood next in line, Devadatta thought,

“What a lazy guy! He should be making HIS body into a bridge instead of the king. And he's so greedy. He needs to stop eating so much.”

But the monkey king lovingly welcomed him to walk on his back to safety.



Devadatta, seeing a very elderly monkey, sneered impatiently and said, “You're walking too slow. Come on! You're taking too long.”

Gripping tightly with only one hand on the root, the monkey king held up his hand for the old monkey to steady himself as he stepped on his back, so he slowly and safely got to the other side of the river.



Devadatta couldn't stand the monkey king's kindness to everyone. He was jealous of all the attention the monkey king got from the other monkeys.



He suddenly climbed way up a branch of a tree and looked down on the monkey king's back. He thought,

“This is my chance to get rid of him. Let's see what happens to Mister Nice Guy NOW!”

He jumped down and landed hard on the monkey king's poor aching back.

The monkey king was injured and in terrible pain. Devadatta ran off into the forest.



The king had watched how the monkey king rescued the whole group of monkeys, and thought,

“This animal, not worrying about his own life, brought his whole group to safety. It's not right to kill this king of the monkeys. I will get him and take care of him somehow.”

So, his men gently bathed the monkey king to clean and soothe his injuries, put a yellow robe on him, gave him tasty sugar water to drink, put healing oil on his body, and laid him on a comfortable bed.

And then the king spoke to the monkey:

“You made your body into a bridge so the monkeys could safely cross the river. Who are you to them, and who are they to you?”



The monkey king replied,

“Victorious king, I guard the monkeys, I am their chief. When they were afraid of you and your men, I jumped over the river with bamboo around my waist, and holding onto a branch, the monkeys passed over my back and are safe now. I have no fear of pain or

death, I only want them to be happy. A lesson for you, O king, is this: if you want to be a good leader, you must deeply desire the happiness of your whole kingdom, all your people, and you must treat each one of them with loving kindness.”

The monkey king then died of his injuries after he said those words. The king was very sad to see the wise monkey die, and ordered his advisors to respect his body as if he were a human king, with the highest honor.

The men did as they were told, and burned the monkey king’s body in a ceremony as if he was a great human king. They took the ashes and covered the skull in gold, and made them into a shrine where flowers, lamps and incense were then offered in honor of the monkey king at the king’s palace gate. The king honored the shrine for the rest of his life, to remember the great lovingkindness of the monkey king, who put his love into action to save his whole monkey group.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the king want his men to shoot the monkeys? (They were eating the mangoes and he wanted to have the mangoes)
2. Why did the monkey king have to use his body as a bridge? (the bamboo was a bit too short to reach across the river for the monkeys to go across)

3. What type of thoughts did Devadatta have about the monkeys? (unkind, critical thoughts)
4. What kind of thoughts did the monkey king have about the monkeys? (loving and kind thoughts)
5. Why did Devadatta jump on the monkey king's back? (he was jealous of the attention the monkey king got from the monkeys)
6. Why did the king make a shrine of the monkey king? (to remember his great lovingkindness)

#### DHARMA DISCUSSION – Lovingkindness:

The monkey king taught the human king about lovingkindness, and he was a great example of lovingkindness.

He had so much lovingkindness that he was willing to let his body suffer in pain to let all the monkeys escape to safety.

He had kind, welcoming thoughts toward all of them, not critical thoughts like Devadatta.

What does lovingkindness mean?

When we say “loving,” who do we think of? Those who we love – our family members, our friends, our pets.

That kind of love usually means attachment – love with “we want” attached. We want to be with them, we want to enjoy their company, we want them to love us, we want to feel happy with them. We're attached to them.

But does lovingkindness mean attachment - loving and being kind to someone so they will make us feel happy?

No. It means we have kind thoughts, kind words and kind actions with a wish to make them feel happy.

So, lovingkindness means to be loving - to wish from our hearts for the happiness of others - plus, treating them with kindness.

Lovingkindness is not just for the people we know and love.

We should try to have lovingkindness for all beings – all people, all animals, even insects.

Should we have loving-kindness to *all* people, even those who behave terribly, hurting others or even killing others?

We know we should stay away from people who misbehave, so that we don't end up getting involved in bad behavior.

And it's difficult to love someone who we are afraid of.

But we can have kind thoughts and good wishes for them - that they find happiness and peace without misbehaving.

Having good wishes for them is a way to have lovingkindness for them.

Did Devadatta the monkey have lovingkindness?

Maybe he had lovingkindness to his family and friends, but he had negative thoughts toward others.

Because he was so busy having negative or critical thoughts about them, he couldn't have loving or kind thoughts towards them.

What kind of negative thoughts did he have? He was critical of the mother monkey for the way she took care of her babies, and he was critical of other monkeys for being unimportant, lazy, or slow, or eating too much.

When we notice something that is different or unusual about a person, for example, something about the way they look, talk, dress, act, eat, or laugh, we can think about it in a kind, accepting way.

Or, we can think about it as weird, ugly, stupid, unpopular, gross, or in some other negative way.



When we have negative thoughts, we might unconsciously make a face like this, which probably hurts the person's feelings. Even if we don't make such an extremely unpleasant face, even a little "side-eye" or frown can be insulting.

Asking the person why they are different, for example, "why do you do that?" "why do you wear that?" "why do you like that?" also can be insulting to them.

It may not seem hurtful to you, and maybe you are curious to see what they say, but it shows them that they are different, that they don't fit in, that they are not accepted.

So even our thoughts and questions can show unkindness toward someone, which blocks us from having lovingkindness.

What can we do to avoid having these negative thoughts toward others? It seems like so many people around us judge and criticize others. Our family members might criticize each other, to help each other learn what is acceptable and what's not acceptable.

But we should try not to think negatively about someone just because they are different in some way.

Does thinking that a person is not attractive, not popular, or not cool, make you better? Does it make you more attractive, more popular, or more cool? Of course not.

We uplift ourselves by uplifting others, not by putting them down.

So, if you notice you are having negative thoughts about someone, try to turn them into positive, kind thoughts: notice something good about the person, or wish that they be peaceful and happy, or that something really nice happens to them.

This is how we develop lovingkindness!

## Chapter 16 - THE MONKEY HEART TREE (Sumsumāra Jataka)

There was once a strong monkey who lived in a forest near a river. And in the river lived a big male crocodile and his wife.

One day, the wife crocodile saw the monkey on the riverbank, and she really wanted to have its heart to eat. She had heard that the heart of a monkey is very tasty.



She crawled up to her husband, and closed her eyes to appear as sweet and charming as possible. She said, “Dear, I would really like to eat the heart of that great big monkey.”

Her husband crocodile said, “But I live in the water, and he lives on dry land. How can we catch him?”

The wife pleaded, “Oh, somehow, he must be caught. If I don’t get his heart to eat, I’ll die.”

The husband wasn’t sure how he was going to catch that big monkey. But he couldn’t tell her “no.” She wanted that monkey heart and she wasn’t going to take “no” for an answer.

He thought for a moment, and then he said, “All right, don’t worry, I have a plan. I’ll give you his heart to eat.”

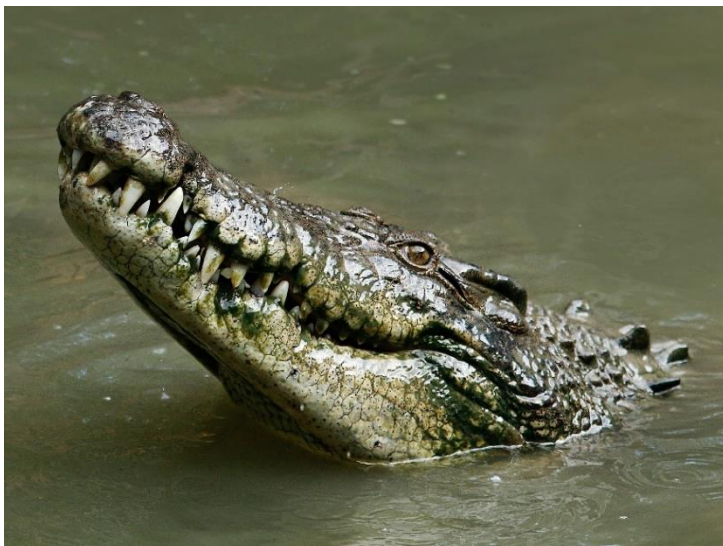
She looked at him with a pleased expression on her face.



Later that day, the monkey went to the river bank to drink water. After he drank, he sat up in a tree. The male crocodile swam up to the river bank where the monkey was sitting and asked,

“Sir monkey, why do you eat bad fruits in this same old place? On the other side of the river there are so many mango trees and other fruit trees, with fruits as sweet as honey! Isn’t it better to cross the river and have all kinds of sweet fruit to eat?”

The monkey replied, “Sir crocodile, the river is deep and wide. How should I get across?”



The crocodile suggested,

“If you want to go, I will let you ride on my back and carry you over.”

The monkey trusted him, and agreed.

So the crocodile said, “Come here, then, get up on my back.”



The monkey climbed onto his back. The crocodile glided out toward the middle of the river.

This was the first time the monkey had ever

ridden on a crocodile's back. And it was the first time he had ever ridden on any animal that was swimming. He was a bit nervous, especially at first. It was a strange but pleasant ride.



Then suddenly, the crocodile twisted his back so the monkey fell off, and was up to his chin in the water. The monkey cried out,

“Ah! My friend, you are letting me sink in the water! What did you do that for?”

The crocodile snarled, “You think I am carrying you because I am a nice guy? No. My wife

wants to eat your heart and I am going to give it to her!”



The monkey, splashing around and struggling to stay afloat in the water, was panicking, terrified that now he surely was going to drown or be killed by the crocodile. He had to do something to save himself! There was nothing to hold onto to keep his head above water except the crocodile. Somehow, he had to convince the crocodile not to kill him but to let him climb on his back again. He thought quickly and said, as he was gasping for breath,

“Friend, I’m glad you told me. If our hearts were inside of us monkeys when we go jumping high up among the trees, then they would bounce out of our chests and break into pieces.”

The crocodile was surprised, and asked, “Well, where do you keep your heart then?”



The monkey clambered onto the crocodile’s back and pointed to a fig tree on the riverbank where they had started off. The tree had clusters of ripe figs hanging from it. The monkey said,

“See, there are our hearts hanging on that fig tree.”

The crocodile, remembering what his wife wanted, said, “Well, if you show me your heart, then I won’t kill you.”

The monkey urged him,

“Take me to the tree then, and I’ll point it out to you, hanging on the tree.”

The crocodile carried him back to the riverbank. The monkey immediately jumped off his back, climbed up the fig tree and sat high up on a branch, far away from those huge dangerous jaws and sharp teeth.

He scolded the crocodile,



“Oh you silly crocodile, you thought there were creatures that kept their hearts on trees! You thought you could fool me, but I outwitted you! You can keep your fruit to yourself. I don't need the mangos and all the fruits across the water there. I am happy and content with figs. They are good enough for me. Now go away, sir crocodile.”

The crocodile felt sad and miserable. He had to return to his wife with nothing.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the crocodile want to catch the monkey? (His wife wanted to eat a monkey's heart)
2. Why do you think the crocodile wife said, “if I don't get his heart to eat, I'll die”? (she was trying to pressure her husband to get the monkey's heart).
3. Did the crocodile really intend to take the monkey across the river to the fruit trees? (no)
4. Did the monkey trust the crocodile's word that he was going to take him across the river to the fruit trees? (yes)
5. Where did the monkey say that the monkeys' hearts were? (hanging on the fig tree)
6. Why did the monkey tell him that? (so he wouldn't be killed or drowned, and the crocodile would take him back to the riverbank)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION – Dishonesty:

The monkey trusted the crocodile, and when he found himself dumped in the water, he felt not only terrified that he would die, but what else might he have felt toward the crocodile? Betrayed, fooled, and maybe angry.

The crocodile tricked, or deceived, the monkey.  
He tempted the monkey to want some tasty fruit, and said he would take the monkey across the river to get it, so he could attack him once they were out in the river where the monkey couldn't run away.  
He didn't intend to do what he said he would do.  
That was dishonesty - saying you're going to do something but not intending to do it.

Sometimes we tell someone we're going to do something but then we forget to do it. But the other person might not know whether you just forgot, or whether you really never meant to do it.  
Has someone ever told you they would do something that was important to you, and then didn't do it?  
How did you feel? Disappointed, betrayed, let down, or angry?  
Did you think they probably forgot? Or did you think they may have been dishonest, never intending to do what they said they would do?  
Did you feel you couldn't trust him or her as much afterward?

When someone is dishonest, what happens to our trust?  
We start to lose trust in that person.  
When a person often doesn't do what they say, or when they often lie, can you trust them? Probably not. And that can ruin a friendship.  
Trust is extremely important in friendships and other relationships – with family members, teachers, coaches, and others.  
Even one lie, one act of dishonesty, sometimes can destroy a relationship.  
And one lie often leads to what? More lies, and then a habit of lies.

So it's important to make sure that when we say we're going to do something, we remember to do it. We should try to keep our word.  
If you say "I will" or "I'll do it" – then remember, others expect you to do it, and if you don't, they may be disappointed or angry.  
If you aren't sure you will be able to do it, what can you say so they don't definitely expect you to do it? You can say "I'll try" or "I plan to," "I expect to," or "I hope I can." Then if you can't, they aren't too disappointed.

What about the monkey in the story – was he honest? No.  
Did he lie? Yes, he lied about monkeys hanging their hearts on the fig tree, and he was dishonest when he said he would point out his heart in the tree.  
Why did he lie? Because he would have been killed otherwise.  
Is that a good reason to lie? If we can't avoid lying in an emergency situation to save someone's life, then it's better to save a life by lying.  
But that's a very rare situation.

Why do people usually lie? Often, people lie to avoid getting in trouble, scolded, criticized or punished, or to avoid being embarrassed.  
Are those good reasons to lie? No, usually not.  
What should we do in the first place, so we don't have to even think about lying to hide our mistakes? We should try to avoid misbehaving so we are not tempted to lie to cover it up, to avoid punishment.  
If we try to behave well, then what happens when we do make a mistake and we are honest about it, when we admit we are wrong? Do we get harshly punished? Usually others are more forgiving; they usually respect us for being honest about what we did wrong. Then if we get scolded or punished, it's not as bad as if they found out we lied.

Sometimes we are tempted to lie to someone to avoid upsetting them.  
If we tell the truth, we think they would be terribly upset.  
Have you ever been in that situation?  
It's sometimes difficult to decide what to say.  
What we should say depends on who we are talking to.  
If it's a parent or teacher, we have a duty to be honest even if our parent or teacher might be upset, because our parents and teachers guide us. We must tell them the truth so they can help us.  
In other situations, we should try to be honest, but we should be very careful, understanding and compassionate in how we communicate.  
For example, if a friend, brother or sister asks you how you like their project on which they worked very hard, and you think it's not very good, what would you say?  
You might point out what you like about their project. You might gently suggest some improvements they could make.

In general, to be an honest person, we should try to make sure that what we think matches what we say, and what we say matches what we do: we say what we really did or what we really intend to do, what is really in our mind, and we make sure to do what we say we're going to do.

## Chapter 17 - THE KING OF HEAVEN (Mandhātu Jataka)

A very long time ago, there lived a king named Mandhāta. This king had done so many kind and generous deeds, or good karmas, in countless past lives that he had collected an unimaginable amount of merit. But instead of developing great compassion and offering the merit to help other beings, he focused on himself and what he liked. So, all his merit automatically gave him what he wanted – the greatest luxuries, wealth and power.

Since he was a young child, he lived as a wealthy prince with many palaces, advisors, servants, horses, elephants, gardens, musicians, entertainers, and weapons, and everything he wanted. When he became an adult, he ruled kingdoms along with other kings. And then after many years he became the supreme king, with power over all of the other kings. Everyone treated him with great respect and admiration, and praised all the good deeds he did.



Not only did he have the greatest wealth, power, success and popularity as a supreme king, but he also had supernatural powers. With one of his powers, when he made a fist with his left hand and touched it with his right hand, a stream of jewels flowed from his hand like rain onto the ground, covering it with seven different types of brilliant sparkling exquisite jewels.



One day, there was something that he wanted but he just couldn't get, no matter how much he tried. So he looked dissatisfied, quite unhappy. His advisors asked him,

“Why are you looking depressed, my lord?”

The king said, “When you consider the great power of my merit, what is this kingdom? There must be a better place. Which place seems really worth having?”

The advisors answered, “Heaven, my lord.”

The king had such great merit and power that he could travel along with his queens and advisors to the Heaven of the Four Great Kings, in something called the Wheel of Empire. When he arrived, the four kings, each of whom guarded one of the four directions – north, south, east and west – came to greet him along with other spirit beings from that heaven-world, offering heavenly flowers and perfumes.



They showed King Mandhāta their heaven-world and generously allowed him to rule over it. So, he happily ruled over this beautiful heaven-world for a long time.

It was interesting and entertaining, with many types of celestial beings with all kinds of supernatural powers, whom one doesn't ordinarily see on the Earth. There were musical spirits, tree spirits, river spirits, royal serpent spirits, and others. In that world, one doesn't experience the pain and suffering there that we experience here in the human world.

Although King Mandhāta had even more popularity, praise, comforts and entertainment there than on Earth, he still didn't feel satisfied. He began to look sick with boredom and discontent.

The four great kings asked him, "Mighty king, are you unsatisfied?"

King Mandhāta said, "What place is more lovely than this heaven?"

They answered, "My lord, we are like servants. The Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods is more lovely than this."

Indeed, the Heaven of the Four Great Kings is the lowest level of heaven, more like the human world than other heaven-worlds. The Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods is one level higher, where beings feel more joy. King Mandhāta set in motion the Wheel of Empire, gathered his queens and advisors around him and turned his face in the direction the four kings were pointing, to the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods. Sakka was the king of the thirty-three gods in that realm. With heavenly flowers and perfumes, and with a big crowd of gods, he approached King Mandhāta and his group.



And he led them to the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods. What a beautiful, delightful place! King Mandhāta saw that the beings there lived in exquisite mansions, better than anything he had seen on Earth.

Sakka was so kind and generous that he gave King Mandhāta half of his kingdom of Heaven. So, Sakka and King Mandhāta together ruled the Heaven of Thirty-three Gods. The two kings ruled happily for millions of years. Time in heaven-worlds lasts much longer than time on Earth, on which only a few days pass during the time that millions of years pass in the heaven-worlds. Finally, Sakka's merit that had earned him a long life in heaven expired, so he had to be born on Earth again to live as a human, and endure the suffering and unpleasantness that people experience on Earth.

Another being became the new Sakka, king of Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods, and he ruled together for millions of years with King Mandhāta. After the new Sakka's time in heaven expired and he was born on Earth, another being became the new Sakka, and he then ruled together with King Mandhāta. King Mandhāta ended up ruling together with a total of 36 different Sakka kings, one after the other.

During all these millions of years, King Mandhāta had a life full of heavenly pleasures, far more delightful than those on Earth. Yet as time went on, the force of his desire grew stronger and stronger. He would become bored after a while, so then he wanted something more, something better, or something new. And, he could get what he wanted. When everything he wanted was easily available, life became really boring. There was no challenge, no excitement, no victory or thrill after a difficult or painful experience. One day, he thought,

“What is only half a heavenly kingdom to me? I will kill Sakka and rule the kingdom alone.”

He tried and tried to kill Sakka, but he couldn't. Sakka could not be killed. And soon, King Mandhāta's negative karmas of desire and greed caused him to lose his power. He suddenly became very old. But he was still a human, so he couldn't just disintegrate in heaven. He had to come back to Earth to die. So, he fell from heaven into a park and lay on the ground.





A gardener saw him lying on the ground, and recognized him as the old King Mandhāta. Only a little time had passed on the Earth during the time the king ruled for millions of years in the heaven-worlds.

The gardener went to the palace to tell the royal family. They saw that the king was very old and weak, and knew he didn't have much longer to live.

They thought about asking the wise old king for some words of wisdom before he passed away. One of the people from the palace asked him,

“My lord, what words of advice can we receive from you?”

The old king said in a feeble voice, “Take from me this message to the people: Mandhāta, king of kings, having ruled supreme over the Earth, for a long time having ruled over the beings in the Heaven of the Four Great Kings, having been King of Heaven during the lifetimes of 36 Sakka kings, now lies here, dead.”

With these words, he died.

Many lifetimes later, the Buddha taught that King Mandhāta was a king ruling over countless beings for so many years, with all the wealth and luxuries of a king of heaven, yet he never could feel satisfied; he never felt content. Having desire is painful, feeling discontent is misery. The students of Buddha know this will always try to control their desires.

## QUESTIONS:

1. What did King Mandhāta do in past lives to be born as a prince with so much wealth and power? (many good deeds, good karmas)
2. Did he offer his merit (the results of his good deeds) to help other beings? (no)
3. Rather than developing compassion and offering his merit to help other beings, what did he focus on? (himself and what he liked)
4. What was the name of the first heaven-world he went to? (Heaven of the Four Great Kings)
5. What was the name of the next heaven-world he went to? (Heaven of the 33 Gods)
6. How did he feel after ruling for a while as a king on Earth, the Heaven of the Four Great Kings, and the Heaven of the 33 Gods? (bored, dissatisfied)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION – Contentment and Controlling Desires:

Although he could get almost everything he wanted, was King Mandhāta happy?

No, he always wanted something more – a better kingdom, more power. When he couldn't get something, or when he became bored, he was disappointed and unhappy.

What was the king's message to the people when he died?

Even if you get everything you want, you still must die.

But it wasn't just dying and death that he had to face.

What about all his selfishness, greed and the violence toward Sakka?

He would have to face the bad results of those negative karmas.

What does this story teach us about happiness? That happiness doesn't last; there is no ongoing satisfaction from getting what you want even if it were possible to get everything you want. There will always be some reason to be dissatisfied.

This demonstrates the first two of the Four Noble Truths taught by the Buddha. What are they?

- 1- that life is full of suffering (which includes unhappiness, pain, dissatisfaction, discomfort, and disappointment), and
- 2- that the cause of suffering is our desires (always wanting something, and being disappointed when we don't get what we want)

Try to think of a time when you got something that you really wanted. Before you got it, did you think, "If I just get this one thing, I'll be so happy"? How long after you got it did the happiness last? Even if it lasts a long time, the thrill of it fades over time. Did you worry about it getting lost, stolen or damaged? After you get it, maybe you want something that goes with it, or something that makes it even better, or you want to collect more of them. After a while, there is always something else that we really want. We see something that other people have, and we want it too. One desire leads to another, and then another, and it goes on and on. It's a never-ending cycle.

Sometimes when we feel unhappy or stressed, we might like to buy something that makes us feel better. Did you ever experience that? It feels good to shop for it, look forward to getting it, try it out, and show it to our friends.

But if we do that too often, it can become an addiction!

Similarly, some of us eat our favorite sweets when we feel unhappy or stressed.

How do you feel when you have spent too much money, or when you eat too many sweets?

You end up even more stressed or uncomfortable!

What can we do to control our desires?

We should know the difference between what we want and what we need.

When you buy or ask for something, think about whether you need it or whether you just want it.

Ask yourself: Is it something you really need for learning, or doing your work, sport, art, or other constructive activity? Do you need it to replace something that is worn out, broken, lost or outgrown? Or is it just something that you want, for entertainment, for your friends to see, or because your friend has it, or just because you like it?

Just because it's something we want but don't really need doesn't mean we shouldn't have it.

But you should watch to make sure you don't let your desires get out of control; watch that you don't overdo it.

And, what if your parents don't agree to give it to you?

Respect their decision, and don't beg or get angry with them.

Is there some way that King Mandhāta could have felt more contentment, without always wanting something more?

Was there something he could have done with his immense amount of merit?

Yes. He could have offered his merit to other beings.

That means, after doing a good deed, prayers or meditation, wishing that the merit be shared with all beings for their peace and happiness.

When you share merit with other beings, you don't lose the good results, but you share it, making others happy, too.

For example, if you had a whole cake or box of ice cream, would you rather eat it alone all by yourself, or would you rather share it with others, eating together? When you share it, you see others smiling and enjoying it. Isn't it a good feeling when you do something to make others happy?

If King Mandhāta had offered his merit to other beings rather than just being the big boss ruling over everyone, he would have enjoyed the feeling of making them happier, sharing his happiness with them, and having compassion for them.

Then he would have felt content. He wouldn't have been so greedy trying to get everything he wanted, and he wouldn't have tried to kill Sakka, which were negative karmas.

When we do something to make the world a better place, or to help others feel more happy and peaceful, that gives us real contentment, a deep satisfaction. Then it's much easier to control our desires.

## Chapter 18 - THE MISER AND HIS CAKE (preamble to Illisa Jataka)

A long time ago, there was a treasurer of a kingdom who was a millionaire. He had so much money but he never spent it. He wouldn't spend money on his family, and certainly wouldn't donate money to help other people. He wouldn't even spend money on himself. He just loved having the money and keeping it safe for himself.

One day, when the treasurer was on his way home from the palace after working for the king, he saw a very thin and poor man who was eating a small cake. The treasurer felt very hungry, and wanted cake too. When he arrived at his house, he thought to himself,



“If I say that I want a cake, then a whole bunch of other people will want to have some cake too, and making enough cake for all of them will use up a lot of my rice flour, butter and sugar. I must not say anything to anyone.”

He imagined everyone in the house, including the servants and visitors, craving and clamoring for some cake if they saw him with a cake.

He was really, really hungry, and he was craving some cake. But he didn't want to have to share cake with others. He walked around, pacing back and forth, trying to control his craving. Hour after hour, he felt more and more miserable. He couldn't stand it anymore, so he went to his bedroom and lay down hugging his bed.

His wife saw him laying in bed, looking sick and miserable. She rubbed his back gently and said, “What's the matter, dear?”

He replied, “Nothing.”

She said, “Maybe the king was upset with you?”

“No, he was not,” he replied.

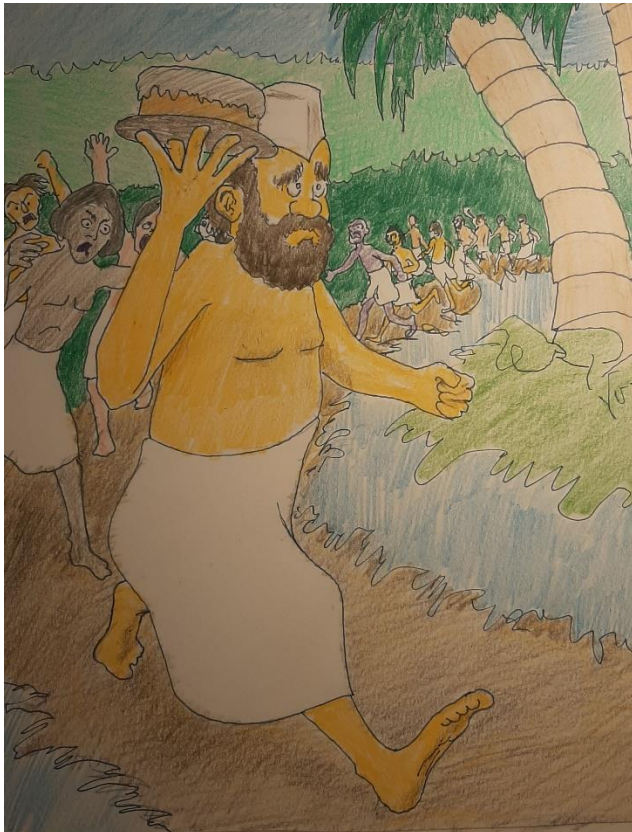
His wife asked, “Have your children or servants done anything to annoy you?”

“Nothing of that kind, either,” he said.

“Well then, is there anything that you want?” she asked. The treasurer wouldn’t say a word, because of his silly fear that he would be wasting his things – his butter, rice flour and sugar – on other people. He lay there speechless on the bed.

His wife insisted, “Speak, dear, tell me what it is you want.”

The treasurer couldn’t keep it a secret anymore. “Yes,” he said with a gulp, “I do have a craving for one thing.”



“And what is that, my dear?” she asked.

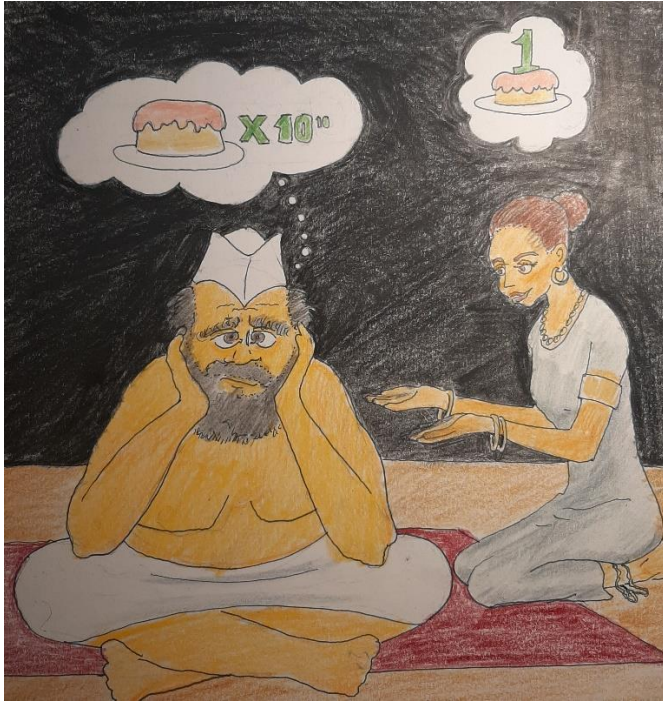
“I would like a cake to eat.”

His wife exclaimed, “Why didn’t you say that before? You’re rich enough! I’ll bake enough cakes to have a feast for the whole town!”

Imagining all the townspeople running after his cakes, he said, “Why worry about them? They should work for their own meal.”

The wife then suggested, “Well then, I’ll bake only enough for the people who live on our street.”

The treasurer said, as if to mock her, “How generous you are!”



The wife then suggested, “Then I’ll bake just enough for our own household.”

He responded, “How extravagant you are!”

She said, “Very well, I’ll bake only enough for our children.”

He said, “Why bother about them?”

“Okay then, I’ll only provide cake for you and me,” she sighed.

“Why should you be in it?” he dared to say to her.

“Then I’ll bake just enough for you alone,” she said, almost in tears, with a defeated voice.



The treasurer grinned, saying, “Do it quietly. There are a lot of people watching whether anyone is cooking here. Take the pots and just a little of the ingredients for the cake to the seventh floor of our house, and do the baking up there. There I will sit alone and undisturbed to eat.”

The wife obeyed. She sent the servants away so they would not know what is happening, and climbed the stairs all the way up to the seventh story of their huge house. Then, she sent a messenger to bring the treasurer.

The treasurer climbed up the seven-story staircase, and bolted the door at each stairwell. When her husband arrived in the room, she started baking the cakes.

A powerful yogi knew what was going on with the treasurer, and wanted to do something about his possessiveness - his dislike of sharing and generosity. So, he went to the treasurer's house.

Then, by his supernatural power, he rose up to sit in mid-air in front of the window of the seventh-story room where the treasurer and his wife were hiding. Although it was common for holy men to come to the front door of a house to receive donations of food, the totally unexpected sight of the yogi at the seventh story window made the treasurer shiver in fear, and he thought,



“It was to escape such visitors that I climbed up here. And now there's one of them at the window!”

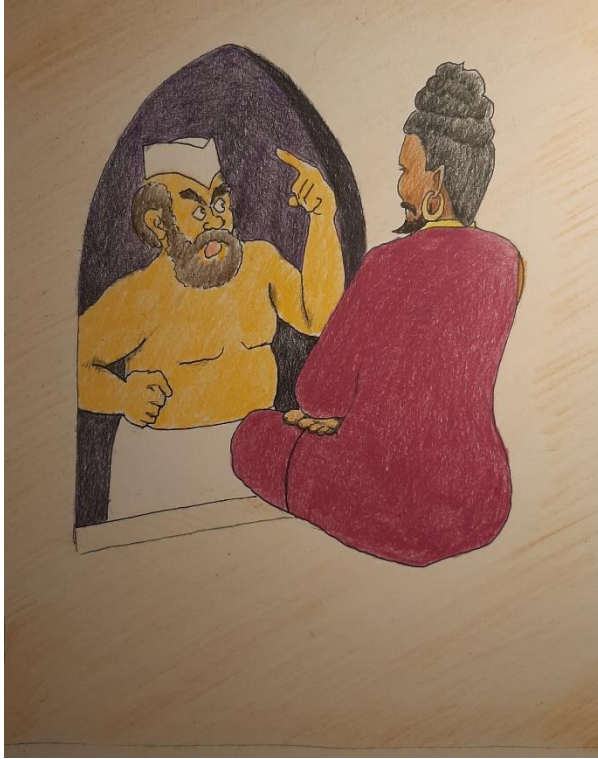
His mind could not think about how a person could be floating in mid-air, why he was there, who he was, or what he was – a ghost, sorcerer or holy man. All he could do was feel rage that the person should not be there.

He sputtered angrily,

“What will you get, yogi, by your simply sitting in mid-air? You can pace up and down until you've made a path in the air, and yet you will still get nothing!”

The yogi began to walk back and forth in the air in front of the window.





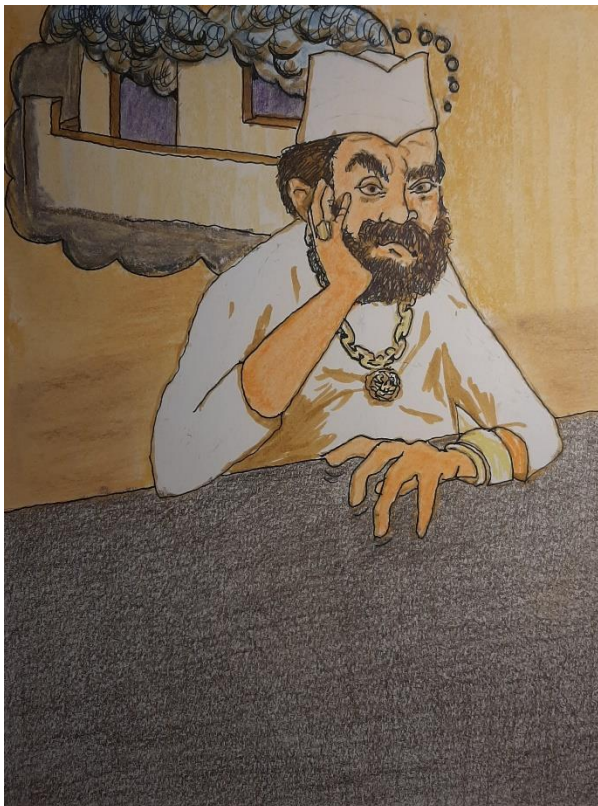
The treasurer shouted, "What will you get by walking back and forth? You can sit cross-legged and meditate in the air, but you'll still get nothing!"

The yogi sat cross-legged in mid-air.

Then said the treasurer, "What will you get by sitting there? You can come and sit on the window sill, but even that won't get you anything!"

The yogi sat on the window sill.

The treasurer yelled, "What will you get by sitting on the window sill? You can belch smoke, and yet you'll still get nothing!"



Then the yogi belched smoke until the whole house was filled with it.

The treasurer tried to keep busy as if nothing was happening. He put on his shirt. But his eyes began to burn as if there were needles in his eyes. He almost blurted out,

"You won't get anything even if you burst into flames," but he was afraid his house might be set on fire. He thought,

"This yogi is most persistent! He simply won't go away empty-handed! I must have just one cake made for him."

He told his wife, "My dear, bake one little cake and give it to the yogi to get rid of him."

So, she mixed just a little bit of dough and put it in a pan. But the dough swelled up and kept swelling up until it filled the whole pan. The treasurer looked over at the pan full of dough, and exclaimed,

“What a lot you must have used!”

Then he took a tiny bit of dough in the tip of a spoon and put it in another pan, and then put it in the oven to bake. But that tiny piece of dough grew even larger than what happened to the first spoonful his wife had put in the pan! He tried again and again putting a tiny bit of dough in a pan, and each one grew into a huge full pan of dough!

He gave up and, pointing to the basket of cakes his wife had already made for him, he said, “You give him a cake, dear.”

She picked up a cake, but all of the other cakes stuck to it. She was shocked. She tried and tried to separate one from the others, but they were all stuck together as if they were glued. She cried out to her husband,

“They’re all stuck together! I can’t get them apart!”

The treasurer said, “I’ll get them apart!”

He tried to separate the cakes, but they stuck together like glue. Then husband and wife both grabbed the cakes at the edge and tried to get them apart. As hard as they tried pulling them apart, they were absolutely stuck.

After pulling at the cakes and not getting even one to come loose, the treasurer was sweating with the effort, and he noticed that he didn’t want the cakes anymore. His craving was gone. He said,

“I really don’t want the cakes anymore. Give them, basket and all, to that yogi.”

The wife offered the whole basket of cakes to the yogi.

The yogi told them about the Three Gems – the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha - and taught them about giving. He made them clearly understand the good results of generosity, sharing and other good deeds.

The treasurer listened very carefully and thought very deeply about what the yogi was saying. He was very moved, and said in an emotional trembling voice,

“Sir, come here and sit on this couch to eat your cakes.”

The yogi said, “Dear treasurer, there are 500 yogis waiting for a meal of cakes. If you would like, you can bring your wife and the cakes and come with me to them.”

The treasurer asked, “Where are they?”

The yogi said, “Forty-five leagues away.”

The treasurer was puzzled, and asked, “How are we to go all that way, sir, without taking a very long time traveling?”

The yogi answered, “Dear treasurer, if you would like, I will transport you there by my supernatural powers. The top of the staircase will stay where it is, but the bottom of the staircase shall be the main gate of where the yogis are waiting. In this way, I will transport you in the time it takes to walk down downstairs.”

As they arrived at the bottom of the staircase, they discovered they were at a gate behind which were waiting the yogis. The treasurer and his wife served the yogis all of the cakes, and then sat down and ate cake also. They noticed that even after they served everyone, there were many cakes left. It seemed impossible that there could be leftover cakes after feeding so many people!

The treasurer and his wife politely said goodbye to all and walked out the gate, where they found themselves at the bottom of the staircase of their house. The treasurer felt very pleased when he had served all the yogis the cakes and satisfied their hunger. He understood that generosity made him feel happy, and that his selfishness had made him miserable. He gave up all of his selfish habits and became a generous man for the rest of his life.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Why didn't the treasurer immediately tell his wife he wanted cake? (he knew others would want some and he didn't want to share)
2. If he shared cake with others, which ingredients was he afraid would be used up or wasted on other people? (flour, butter and sugar)
3. Why did the treasurer finally tell his wife to bake the yogi a cake? (the yogi wouldn't go away from the window and filled the house with smoke)
4. What happened to the cake dough when they tried to put a little bit in the pan? (it swelled up and filled the pan)
5. What happened when the wife tried to give the yogi a cake from the basket of cakes? (it stuck to the other cakes)
6. How did the treasurer feel about the cakes when they all stuck together? (he didn't want them anymore)
7. How did he feel when he served cakes to all the yogis? (happy)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION – Possessiveness and Generosity:

How did the treasurer feel when he was craving for cake? Miserable.  
How do you think he felt when his wife was secretly baking cakes for him? He was worried, fearful that someone might find out.  
So he locked the doors and had to climb up seven flights of steps.  
Although he was looking forward to enjoying the cakes, he was not relaxed. He was "possessive," which means he likes to keep his own things all to himself and not share them.  
People who are possessive often worry that someone might take away their things, or might lose, break, or damage them, or might use them up. They get upset if someone might want something of theirs, and often say, "That's mine!" "Don't touch!" "Give it back!" and, "You can't have it!"

Have you ever said something like that? We all probably have.  
Have you ever felt uncomfortable when someone touches something of yours, worrying they might take it away or ruin it?  
We all have felt that way sometimes, especially if it's something we really need that's fragile or expensive.  
And most of us have had an experience where someone actually did lose or break something of ours.  
That may make us feel more possessive, worried it might happen again.  
We don't want someone to break or lose something else of ours!  
But if we often have those feelings, or if we very often feel uncomfortable sharing, then we are too attached to our things, too possessive, and we end up like the treasurer - very worried and stressed.

When did the treasurer get over his worry and finally feel happy?  
When he served the cakes to the yogis - when he was generous.  
So, what did he learn about possessiveness, generosity and happiness?  
He learned that keeping his things for himself, being possessive, didn't bring him happiness. Instead, it brought him stress, fear, and anger.  
And he learned that generosity made him feel happy.

How did it happen, that the very thing he didn't want to do – to share – ended up bringing him happiness?  
Because the worry, fear and anger that goes along with possessiveness disappears when you give it up – when you decide that clinging to your things isn't worth it, and you let go of your attachment to your things.  
When you are generous, giving to others, sharing with others, you give up your attachment to those things.  
The more often you are generous, the more you are letting go of attachment to things, and giving up that clingy, worried feeling.  
The best way to overcome our possessiveness is by being generous.

What if a selfish person tries to manipulate you or force you to give or share? Is it generous to give to him? No, that would be giving out of fear.  
And that may not be the right person to share with.  
Instead, we share with someone because we care about them; we give or share with lovingkindness.

## Chapter 19 - THE HUNTER AND THE QUAILS (Sammodamāna Jataka)



There was once an old quail, a beautiful elderly bird with silver colored feathers and a plump chest.

He lived with his large family and his many friends, which all together made a huge flock of quails.



Some distance away lived a quail hunter. With his voice he could make a quail call, which is a sound of a quail that is afraid or in distress. When he made that sound, all the quails in the area rushed over to him because they thought that the sound was coming from a quail nearby that needed their help.

When a big group landed near him, he threw a big net over them to capture them, gathering the sides of the net to trap the birds inside. Then he crammed them into a big basket and took them to a market to sell them for people to eat.

The old quail saw from a distance what the hunter had done to other flocks of quails. And recently, he noticed that the hunter had been coming closer and closer to where the old quail lived. He was responsible for keeping his friends and family safe, and he thought to himself, “I must make a plan to save my flock.”

So, he called his family and friends to a meeting, and said,

“There is a hunter who is destroying other flocks of birds. He is a great danger to us. He wants to trap us in a net.”

All the quails were shocked and upset, and murmured among themselves. The old quail continued,

“I have a plan that we must follow so he won’t be able to catch us. From now on, the very moment the hunter throws the net over you, each of you must raise your neck under the net at the same time. Then all of you together must fly away with the net wherever you want, and drop the net on a thorn bush. If we do this, we all will escape from the nets.”

The old quail’s family and friends all enthusiastically agreed, “Very good!”

The next day, the hunter went out with his net, and made the sound of a quail in distress. The flock immediately flew over toward the hunter. They didn’t know the sound came from the hunter; when they heard it, their natural sympathetic reaction was to help a friend who is in distress.



The hunter threw the net, which landed on top of many of the quails. But they remembered the old quail’s plan, and they immediately stretched their necks up toward the sky, so their heads rose up through the net and they lifted the net up a little, freeing their wings to fly.



They suddenly flew up with the net over them, and then, all at once they turned, dropping the net onto a thorn bush and escaping from underneath it. Their plan worked! They flew away to safety.

The hunter shook his head in disbelief, and worked on getting his net out of the thorn bush.

It was very tangled up in the thorn bush, so it took a long time to get it all out, and soon it was evening. He had to go home empty-handed, with no quails.

The next day, the hunter went out and made the sound of the quail's distress call, and the quails, worried that a friend was in distress, loyally flew over in the direction of the hunter. The hunter threw the net on them.

They raised up their heads and flew up with the net, dropping it on a thorn bush. The hunter again worked hard trying to get the tangled net out of the thorn bush, until evening came. And again he went home empty-handed, with no quails.

The hunter was patient, and every day he tried again. But he could not catch the quails.

His wife grew more and more annoyed when he came home without having caught even one bird. One evening when he walked in the door, his wife, seeing him arrive home without having caught any quails yet again, angrily said,

“Day after day you return home empty-handed. What's going on? What are you doing out there? How can you come home with no birds? You must be running a secret business somewhere that you aren't telling me about!”



The hunter replied, “No, my dear. I’m not operating any secret business. The fact is, those quails have figured out how to cooperate, how to work together now. The moment my net is over them, off they fly with it and escape, leaving it on a thorn bush.”



She shouted, “I don’t believe that! And even if that’s true, then how are you going to catch the birds?”

The hunter replied, “Please be patient. Don’t be upset. They won’t cooperate always. I know how family members are; they always have disagreements, arguing and quarreling. As soon as they start bickering among themselves, I will trap a whole bunch of them in my net, and that will bring a smile to your face. As long as they remain cooperative, the birds will fly off with the net. But when quarrels arise, they will be mine.”

Not long after this, one of the quails, while landing in an area where the birds were eating, stepped by accident on the head of another quail, who angrily shouted,

“AOWW! Who stepped on my head?”

The guilty quail admitted, “I did, but I didn’t mean to. Don’t be angry.”

But the quail was in an irritable mood, and felt very annoyed that someone would step on his head. He squawked louder,

“You are always so clumsy! You don’t look where you are going.”

The guilty quail responded loudly, “I’m sorry, it was an accident.”

The stepped-on quail wouldn’t accept his apology and continued scolding,



“You bumped me yesterday too. You’re always trying to get the best food, shoving everyone else out of the way!”

The guilty quail argued, “Just get over it! You are so loud and obnoxious! I guess you think you’re special. Do

you think YOU single-handedly lifted up the net for everyone?”

The old quail heard the two birds squabbling and thought, “This quarreling is no good, it will lead to danger. We can’t be safe anymore when someone starts bickering. The time has come when the quails will no longer cooperate to lift up the net, so they will be destroyed. The hunter will get his opportunity to catch us. I can’t stay here any longer.”

So he along with some of the other more peaceful quails flew away, leaving the rest of the flock.

A few days later, the hunter came back again and made the quail distress call. As usual, the quails flew toward him, and the hunter threw his net over them.

Then one quail said to another, “They say that when you were working on lifting up the net last time, the feathers of your head fell off, so you didn’t lift it. So, now it’s YOUR turn to lift the net – go on, lift away!”

The other quail said, “One time when you were supposed to lift up the net with everyone, they say the feathers on both your wings fell off, so you didn’t lift it. So, now it’s YOUR turn. YOU lift up the net!”

The first quail said stubbornly, “I am not going to hold up the net for you!”

The other quail shouted, “Why should I help any of you when you didn’t help before?”

While they were quarreling over who should lift the net, the hunter grabbed the sides of the net, folding it over so the birds were trapped inside it. Then he crammed them in a pile into his basket and carried them home, looking forward to seeing his wife’s smiling face, happy that he finally got the birds.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. How did the hunter make the quails come to him? (he made a sound like a quail in distress)
2. What did the old quail tell them to do to escape the net? (Raise their necks up, fly away with the net, and drop it on a thorn bush)
3. Why was the hunter’s wife annoyed? (her husband didn’t catch any quails)
4. What did the hunter say that family members always do among themselves? (argue and bicker)
5. What did the old quail think would happen when someone starts bickering? (the birds won’t lift up the net and will be caught by the hunter)
6. What were the quails quarreling about when the net fell over them? (who should help lift the net)

#### DHARMA DISCUSSION – Quarreling:

We heard a couple other words in the story that mean essentially the same thing as quarreling. Can you remember those words?

Bickering and squabbling.

Can you think of any other words with a similar meaning?

A row (an older word), fighting, arguing, disputing, debating, misunderstanding, disagreement.

Quarreling, bickering, squabbling, and having a row mean the same thing. How are they different from the other words?

Fighting can include physical fighting – pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking. The other words include situations in which people are speaking respectfully and listening to each other, without being overly emotional.

Quarreling, bickering and squabbling mean an angry disagreement, arguing loudly, usually over something that's not very important. Someone says or does something that annoys another, who starts scolding, criticizing, blaming, or insulting them. It can erupt into a loud, emotional fight, and can even become a big battle!

When the old quail saw the quails quarreling, he knew they were developing a habit of quarreling. And he worried that they would quarrel just at the wrong time - when they needed to cooperate to keep each other safe.

Sure enough, that's what happened.

They were so involved in their quarrel over who should help lift the net, that they didn't think about what was really important – that they all must work together to save their lives.

So, what happens to working together, teamwork, and cooperation when we quarrel? It fails. We can't cooperate when we are quarreling.

What other problems can result from quarreling?

It can lead to hitting, breaking or damaging something, or losing your friendship.

The person may not want to talk to you anymore, or may do something later in revenge.

And in any case, time is wasted that could have spent doing something better, something fun.

And, quarreling results in mental and physical stress – we feel upset, we don't feel good afterward.

And what about others who hear us bickering? They get annoyed hearing us; they won't want to make friends with us.

What happens if we quarrel often, or if we often see others quarreling, for example on television?

Quarreling can become a habit; it becomes a normal behavior for us.

If we just lash out at others whenever we are annoyed, and we don't learn to control our emotions, then every time someone upsets us, we just start bickering. Many adults have this problem!

Actually, almost all kids quarrel sometimes. And it's not all bad! Have you ever quarreled with sisters, brothers, cousins, or friends? Especially when we're young, it can be useful! Can you think of how it can be useful - a good thing? It can help us practice controlling our emotions and solving conflicts! When we try to avoid making it worse, when we try to calm it down, we are practicing our skills in making peace. We may even find a solution to a problem. Sometimes, you may have to shout and even argue loudly to protect someone from danger or from doing something wrong.

What someone is quarreling with you, what do you do to calm it down?

Here are some ideas:

Apologize for whatever you did or said that may have annoyed them  
Share or compromise, for example: "You can have it for half an hour, then it's my turn"  
Forgive them  
Ignore them  
Let them have what they want  
Agree with them, just "let it go"  
Give them something that they would like  
Listen patiently without responding, let them "vent"  
Respond with a calm, quiet voice  
Ask "how can I help make you feel better?"  
Kindly ask questions to find out what they want, to help find a solution  
Change the subject  
Agree to disagree  
Walk away, take a "time out"  
Say "I still love you" or "I love you anyway"  
Later, do something special for them  
Think about things that make you happy, to calm yourself down  
Don't remind them of the quarrel – don't bring it up later.

## Chapter 20 - THE SHIPWRECK (Silanisamsa Jataka)

There was once a man who was a student of the Buddha Kassapa, who was the Buddha living on Earth before the Buddha of our time known as Gautama Buddha or Shakyamuni Buddha. So, this disciple of the Buddha Kassapa was a Buddhist of very ancient times, many thousands of years ago. He put into practice the Dharma that Buddha Kassapa had taught.

He had an acquaintance who was a barber, who cut hair and shaved and trimmed beards for a living. The barber was very successful in his business and became quite wealthy. He even owned a small ship. One day, he decided to go on a voyage on his ship across the sea to India. It would take several days to get there. His wife said to him,

“On such a long and dangerous journey, you really should travel with a friend who is wise and who would be able to help you in whatever circumstances that could arise.”

She thought immediately of the Buddhist man, and sent a messenger to request that he come quickly to accompany her husband on his journey. The Buddhist soon arrived at the barber’s house, and the two men packed some food, clothes and other necessities for their trip. The two men boarded the ship and began their journey.



Everything was going well until a storm arose after a week at sea. The winds started whipping the sails and the ship started to rise up high and pitch down low as it rode over the large waves. The rain was streaming down and the men struggled to roll up the sails so the boat wouldn’t toss and turn so much. But even after the sails were tied up, the ship tossed and turned with extreme force on the huge waves. And there was water everywhere – rain from the sky and the spray from the waves. Soon the men noticed that a lot of water was spraying over the sides of the ship,

smacking hard against the deck and flowing over it. The ship started leaning heavily to one side. Waves continued to crash against the ship so hard that some of the wood planks of the ship's hull started loosening and breaking off. As the ship filled with water and started to sink into the sea, the men had only one way to save themselves – to jump over the side.

They jumped into the raging sea and gasped for breath, frantically trying to keep afloat as they were tossed around like toys among the roaring waves. They were getting exhausted, and searched for something to hang onto. They spotted a plank that had broken off the ship, and made their way to it. Finally, they grabbed hold of it, and, panting desperately for breath, hung on for dear life.

The storm began to calm down, the waves were not so wild, and they looked for any sign of land around them. They saw the faint outline of some land in the distance, and with all the strength they had left, they started kicking their feet and paddling toward the land while clinging to the wooden plank.

Finally, utterly exhausted, they floated as the waves washed them toward the shore. They were so relieved to feel the warm sand underneath their feet! But it was only a tiny island. There was no hope of finding any people who might offer them food. The barber was feeling really hungry and after a little rest, he strode off to see what he could find to eat. He saw some birds, and as the birds didn't know the danger of a human being, they just



sat there while he walked up, grabbed them, and killed them. With some sticks and dry grass he made a fire and roasted the birds over it. He generously offered some of the meal to the Buddhist, who replied,

“No thank you, I've had enough.”

Perhaps the Buddhist meant that he wasn't hungry. But that was unlikely, as they had been battling the storm and sea for many long hours. More likely, he didn't want to eat the birds due to his compassion for them and for the very hungry barber, and his mind was focused not on hunger but on the hopelessness of their situation, alone on the deserted island. He thought,

“In this place there is no help for us except the Three Jewels.”

So he thought deeply about the blessings of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. His mind was so clear and concentrated on the Buddha, his teachings, and the people who practice his teachings, that he was soon in a deep, blissful meditation.



Meanwhile, there was a great serpent king, a royal Naga, who lived on the island. Nagas are very sensitive beings with supernatural powers who cannot be seen by ordinary people.

The Naga king could feel the intensity of the Buddhist man's meditation and could sense the goodness of his character. The royal Naga immediately felt a strong inspiration to help this noble being. With his immense supernatural powers, he could change his body into any form, and he turned his body into a ship to save the Buddhist man's life. The ship was filled with food, blankets, clothes and other items that would be necessary for the man's comfort.

A spirit of the sea appeared on the ship as the skipper, one who operates it. The masts of the ship holding up the sails were sapphire blue, the ropes were silver color, and the wooden planks on the deck looked golden.



The sea spirit stood on the deck and cried out, “Any passengers for India?”

The Buddhist man responded, “Yes, that’s where we are bound for!”



The sea spirit said with a welcome smile, “Come on board then!”

The Buddhist man and the barber waded out in the water to the ship. The Buddhist man clung to a rope ladder dangling from the deck, and climbed aboard. As he alighted on the deck, he said to the sea spirit, who was pulling up the ladder,

“My friend the barber is coming too. Please let down the rope ladder for him!”

The sea spirit replied, “You may come, but not he.”

The Buddhist man was puzzled. “Why not?” he asked.

“He is not a man of the virtuous life, that’s why,” responded the sea spirit, “I brought this ship for you, not for him.”

The Buddhist man felt great compassion for his friend, who had neither learned Dharma nor developed many virtues (good qualities), and announced immediately, in a loud voice,

“Very well, the gifts I have given, the virtues I have practiced, the powers I have developed – I give him the results of all of them!”

With that statement, the Buddhist man dedicated all of his merits, all of his good karmas, to his friend.

The barber, standing in the water, heard his friend’s generous offer and said, “I thank you, master!” Although he was so wealthy and successful in business, he regarded the Buddhist as far superior for his great virtues and generosity.

“Now,” said the sea spirit to the barber, “I can take you aboard.”

He dropped the rope ladder for the barber to climb aboard and then went about his tasks of adjusting the sails to begin their voyage. With the Buddhist and the barber sitting safely on deck, the sea spirit sailed the ship to India, entering the Ganges river and sailing all the way up the river to the famous holy city of Benares, which is now called Varanasi.



When they arrived, the sea spirit, by his supernatural power, created many gold coins that would be enough for the two men to live on and to travel back home, and then gave them some parting words:

“Keep company with the wise and good. If this barber had not been in the company of this holy man, he would have died in the middle of the sea.”

He continued, “See the result of selflessness, virtue and practicing Dharma! A serpent turns himself into a ship and takes the good man over the sea. Make friends only with good people. Making friends with a good person, the barber could get to safety.”

The sea spirit then rose up in mid-air and went back to his home, taking along with him the Naga king, who resumed his serpent form as the ship disappeared.

## QUESTIONS:

1. What was the good quality of the Buddhist man that the barber's wife thought was important when she chose him to go with her husband on the long journey? (he was wise and would be able to help her husband)
2. When they reached the island, what did the Buddhist think was their only hope? (the Three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha)
3. Why did the Naga king want to help the Buddhist man? (he had a good character and intense meditation)
4. Why did the sea spirit not want to let the barber on the ship? (he didn't develop many virtues and didn't learn Dharma)
5. What did the Buddhist do so the barber could get on the ship? (he offered all of his merits, his good karmas, to the barber)
6. What did the sea spirit teach about friends? (to make friends only with good people)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION – Sharing merit:

The Buddhist man shared all of his good karmas, all the results of the virtues he practiced, including generosity, to the barber. He shared them immediately, without thinking about it. Why? Because of his compassion for the barber and his generosity.

We call that “dedicating merits” or “offering merits” to others.

What are “merits”?

Merits include good deeds. Can you think of some examples? Being kind, helping others, being generous.

Merits also include Buddhist virtues. Can you think of some Buddhist virtues, or good qualities? Patience, tolerance, honesty, forgiving others, admitting our mistakes, and self-control.

And merits include Buddhist practices. What Buddhist practices do you do? Prayers, meditation, mindfulness, and learning Dharma, like what we are doing right now!

Actually, merits include anything we say or do with love, with a good heart.

Who do we offer merits to?

In the story, the Buddhist offered his merits to his friend the barber.

Similarly, we can offer merits to 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, or all “sentient beings” – that means all beings who are conscious; who are born, die, and suffer; who live in any of the six realms of samsara – humans, animals, gods, hungry ghosts, asuras, and beings in hell-worlds.

If we give our merits to others, then don't we lose them?

It seems logical that if we give everything away, we have nothing left for ourselves.

So might seem that we should just dedicate a few of our merits, not all of them.

But that isn't what the Buddhist man did in the story.

He offered all of his merits.

And what happened - did he lose all of his good luck?

Did the barber get all the good luck instead? Did he go to India alone with the sea spirit, instead of the Buddhist? No!

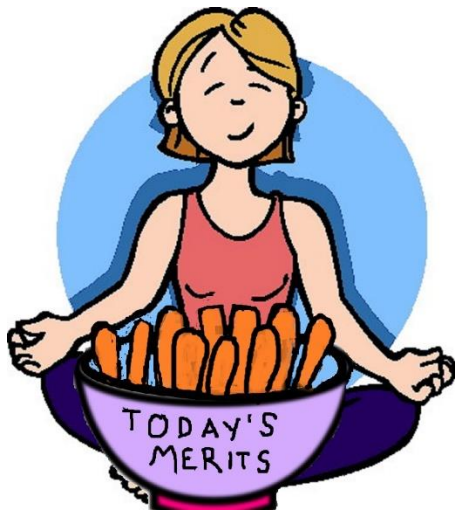
The Buddhist was still just as fortunate.

He didn't lose his merits even after he gave them all away.

Plus, sharing his merit, being generous and compassionate, gave him even more merit!

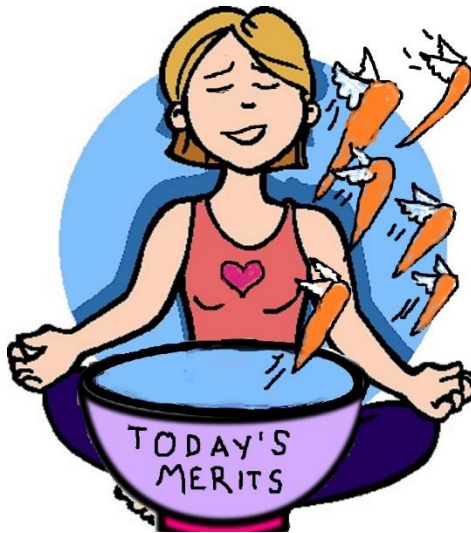
He was extra lucky in having his life saved, going to India with his friend, and receiving gold coins to spend there.

Dedicating our merits isn't like a math problem, where, if we earn 10 merits and give them all away, we are left with zero merits.



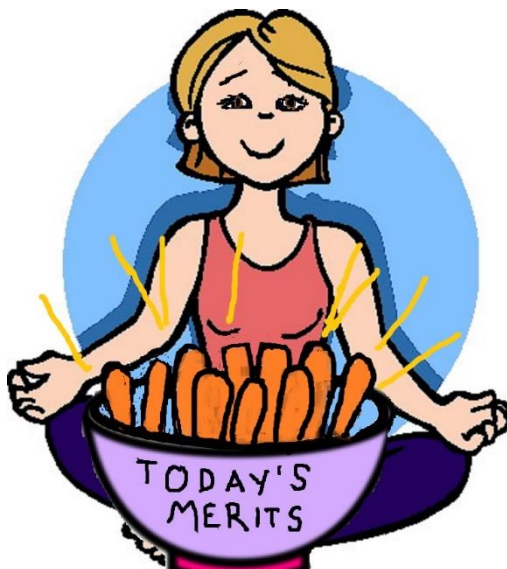
So we offer all our merits to others, not just some of our merits.

When we give them away, then we don't become arrogant, too proud and attached to them, thinking, "I have more merits than others."



By offering all our merits, we practice generosity, not being stingy with our merits.

And we practice compassion, wanting to remove the suffering of others.



And we don't lose the merits that we share with others!

Even though we gave them away, we still have the same merits, plus the merit of having been generous in sharing them!

When and how do we offer merits?

When we do a Dharma practice, such as chanting, meditating, listening to a Dharma talk, or at the end of Dharma class, we usually chant a “dedication of merit” at the end of the practice.

When we do a special good deed, such as making an offering to a temple, or giving food to the poor, we dedicate the merit afterward.

And at the end of the day, before we go to bed, we can dedicate the merits of everything that we did with love, every good thing we did that day.

We can do a particular chant to dedicate merit, or just wish that your merits be of benefit to all beings, that they become happy and peaceful.

Also, there are certain ceremonies to offer merits.

For example in the Theravada Buddhist tradition, family members do a special chant while pouring water into a small bowl or cup until it is full and the water runs over the edge, to offer merits to their loved ones who have passed away.

People may light a butter lamp or incense at a shrine to offer merits to loved ones.

Or families may request a monk to perform a puja ceremony to offer merits to their loved ones.

## Chapter 21 - THE PALACE DOGS AND THE CITY DOGS (Kukkura Jataka)

A long time ago, the King of Benares went out for the day in his carriage pulled by two graceful milk-white horses harnessed to the carriage with new and very beautiful expensive gold-painted leather straps.



He was enjoying the ride so much that he didn't return to the palace until after sunset.

The carriage driver put the horses into the stable for

the night, but because it was so dark outside, he left the carriage outside.

The beautiful harnesses, still attached to the carriage, were left on the ground outside the palace. That night it rained, and the lovely leather harnesses got wet.

In the morning, as the servants were busy preparing breakfast, the king's dogs walked downstairs from the upper chambers of the palace. They went outside and sniffed at the fresh morning air. They smelled the leather. When leather gets wet, it smells a bit stronger than usual. It smelled very tasty to the dogs. They followed their noses to where the fancy leather harnesses were on the ground. They sniffed at the gold painted leather, and their stomachs growled with hunger. They had not had their breakfast yet.

They licked at the harnesses and started to chew on them. No one saw the dogs, as the palace guards were only watching the palace gates for anyone coming in, and everyone else was inside the palace.



Oh, how delightful the leather was to chew! The dogs enjoyed gnawing and chewing on it so much that by the time the servants called them back inside for breakfast, there were only soggy shreds of leather left on the ground where the shiny new harnesses had been.

Later, when the king's servants went outside, next to the carriage they saw the chewed-up pieces of the harnesses. What animal or what creatures had caused such destruction? The servants imagined that some starving mongrels must have chewed up all the leather. But they couldn't have climbed over the high walls around the palace; perhaps they crawled in through the sewer pipe. The servants knew the king would be terribly upset and they would have to explain how his precious new harnesses had gotten ruined. They went to him right away to place the blame on whatever wretched creatures might have caused this disaster. Wincing in fear of his response, they said to him,

“Sire, dogs have gotten in through the sewer pipe and have gnawed the leather and straps of your majesty's carriage.”

The king became enraged! He thought of the stray dogs that lived in the streets of the city. He imagined their flea-bitten bodies creeping through the filthy sewer to invade his pristine and private grounds for their midnight entertainment, ruining his expensive harnesses for the sheer joy of destruction and making a mess. His face red with anger, he shouted,



“Kill every dog you see!”

The king’s servants immediately sent messengers to announce to the people in the city the king’s order to kill all dogs. People all over the city started killing every dog they saw. Hundreds of dogs all over the city wondered why their friends were being killed. They became very frightened and hid just outside the city in the graveyard, where the leader of the stray dogs lived.

The leader of the dogs was rather small. He didn’t become the leader because he was big and strong, but because he walked with great calmness, courage and dignity. Not only dogs and but also people admired and respected him. He was wise, generous, and kind, and cared about the welfare of the other dogs rather than himself.



He asked the dogs, “Why are so many of you gathered here together?”

One of the dogs told him, “The king was so enraged when he heard that the leather harnesses

and straps of his carriage had been chewed by dogs, that he has ordered all dogs to be killed.”

Another dog said, “Dogs are being destroyed everywhere in the city. It’s terribly dangerous for us!”

The leader of the dogs thought to himself, “No dogs from outside the palace walls can get into the palace grounds, which are so closely watched

by guards and servants. It must be the purebred dogs inside the palace who have done it. Now, nothing is happening to the dogs who actually are guilty, while the innocent dogs are being put to death. What if I were to discover the real culprits and reveal it to the king, and therefore save the lives of my family and friends?”

He comforted his friends, the dogs gathered around him, by saying, “Have no fear. I will save you. Just wait here until I see the king.”



He knew the terrible risk and danger of walking up to the palace. But he concentrated on thoughts of lovingkindness to all beings. And he thought about the great virtues of Buddhism, called the Ten Perfections: generosity, good conduct, unselfishness, wisdom, fearless energy, patience, truthfulness, determination, lovingkindness, and equal-mindedness. As he concentrated on those good qualities, he walked alone into the city, with his head and tail held high. He also made a silent command in his mind to all who might intend to harm him:

“Let no hand be lifted to throw stick or stone at me.”

And amazingly, not one man became angry at the sight of him. All the people just passed by him without any thoughts of cruelty despite the king’s order.

Meanwhile, the king was sitting on his throne in his hall of justice, where he made important decisions and gave orders. In walked the leader of the dogs, and then he ran straight toward the king and leaped right under his throne!

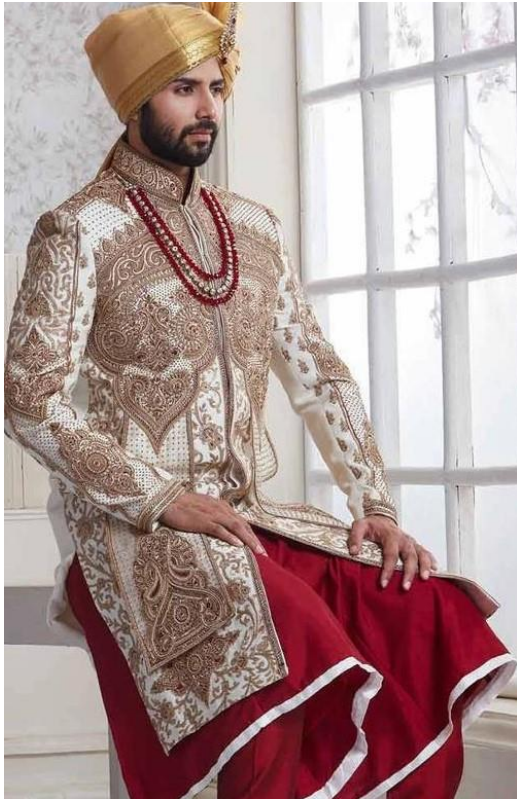
Everyone was shocked. The king stood up while his servants tried to grab and pull the dog out from under the throne. The king put his hands on the servants’ arms and motioned for them to stop.

The leader of dogs, feeling a bit reassured by the king having intervened, crept out from under the throne. He bowed to the king and said,

“Is it you who are having the dogs destroyed?”

The king admitted, “Yes, it is I.”

The dog leader asked, “O king of men, what is their offense?”



The king replied, “They have been chewing the leather harnesses and straps of my carriage.”

The dog leader asked, “Do you know the dogs who actually did this mischief?”

The king admitted, “No, I do not.”

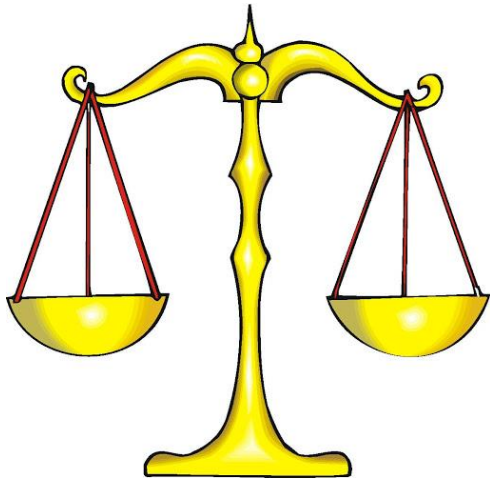
The dog leader reasoned, “But, your majesty, if you don’t know for certain who the real culprits are, it’s not right to order the destruction of every dog that is seen.”

The king asserted firmly, “It was because dogs had chewed the leather of my carriage that I ordered them all to be killed.”

The dog leader asked, “Do your people kill all dogs without exception, or are there some dogs who are spared?”

The king started feeling a bit uncomfortable. He was thinking that of course his special, pampered purebred dogs are nothing like the dirty wild mongrels that prowl the streets, getting into all sorts of mischief - stealing food, knocking over trashcans, fighting, sneaking into chicken coops to fill their bellies, and spreading parasites like fleas and mites around the city. He answered, “Some dogs are spared – the purebred dogs of my own palace.”

The dog leader bravely reasoned, “Sire, you were saying that you had ordered the slaughter of ALL dogs wherever they are found, because dogs had chewed the leather of your carriage. But now you say that the purebred dogs of your own palace are an exception; they aren’t put to death. Therefore, you are following the Four Evils: prejudice, dislike, ignorance, and fear. Such thinking is wrong; it is not how a king should think.”



He continued, “Kings in difficult situations should be as fair and unbiased as the two pans of a scale when balanced – one should not be lower than the other. But in this instance, since the royal dogs go totally free while the poor street dogs are killed, this is not the doom of all dogs alike, but only the slaughter of the poor dogs.”

The king and his advisors and servants remained silent, totally in awe of this amazing dog of the streets who had incredible wisdom. The great dog leader lifted up his sweet, calm voice and continued,

“Sire, it is not justice that you are performing. The purebred dogs raised in the royal palace, so strong and beautiful – it is not these, but only we who are doomed to die. This is not punishment for all alike; it is slaughter of the poor.”

After listening to the wise dog’s words, the king said, “Do you in your wisdom know who it actually was that chewed the leather of my carriage?”

The dog leader said, “Yes, sire.”

“Who was it?” the king asked.

The dog leader answered, “The purebred dogs that live in your own palace.”

The king, doubting that could be true, asked, “How can it be shown that it was they who chewed the leather?”

The dog leader said bravely, "I will prove it to you."

"Do so, wise one," the king said.

The dog leader responded, "Then bring your dogs here, and have a little buttermilk and kusa-grass brought in."



The king told his servants to carry out the dog leader's instructions. The elegant purebred dogs paraded in and stood obediently in front of the king.

Then said the dog leader, "Let this grass be mashed up in the buttermilk, and make the dogs drink it."

Bowls containing buttermilk and grass were set in front of each dog. The king said something to the dogs, and they obediently lapped the buttermilk and chewed and swallowed the grass.



Soon, one of the dogs gagged and vomited. One after the other, the dogs started coughing and retching, and eventually

each vomited up what was in his stomach. And there was the proof! In front of each dog in a puddle of vomit were bits of leather!

The king couldn't help but feel full of joy at the wisdom of the great leader of dogs. He cried out,

"This is like the judgment of a perfect Buddha himself!"

He offered the dog leader his own royal white umbrella to show his great respect to the dog with amazing wisdom.

The dog leader wanted to convey more teachings to the king. He reminded the king to be always fair and consistent, and treat people with equal-mindedness, without having favorites or prejudices. He taught the king other virtues, including kindness and generosity to all, and the Five Precepts: to avoid killing, stealing, misconduct, lying and drunkenness, intoxication. He respectfully gave the royal umbrella back to the king.

Hearing these words, the king commanded that the lives of all creatures should be safe from harm. He ordered that all dogs should have a constant supply of food like what he himself ate. He was inspired to be generous to those in need and do other good deeds for the rest of his life.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What was the king so attached to, that he became enraged when they were ruined? (the new leather harnesses)
2. Why did the servants tell the king that dogs came through the sewer and chewed the harnesses? (the servants had to blame some animal for chewing the harnesses, so they blamed the street dogs)
3. Why didn't the servants or the king think that the palace dogs chewed the harnesses? (they didn't think the palace dogs would do that)
4. What did the dog leader do to avoid being killed while he walked to the palace? (he thought of lovingkindness and Buddhist virtues, the Ten Perfections, and silently commanded people not to harm him)
5. Why did the dog leader tell the king to give the palace dogs buttermilk and grass? (so they would vomit out the leather, proving that they chewed it)
6. In what way was the king unfair? (he blamed and punished the street dogs for something they didn't do, but didn't punish the palace dogs)

## DHARMA DISCUSSION – Prejudice:

Why was the king so angry when the harnesses were ruined?

Because he was very attached to them, he couldn't stand to lose them.

He was so angry and revengeful that he wasn't thinking clearly and carefully, and just believed what the servants said without asking questions or investigating the situation.

And he had very negative thoughts about street dogs.

He imagined them as filthy, destructive and messy, that they get into mischief to fill their bellies.

But he imagined his purebred dogs to be clean and respectful, that they wouldn't be destructive.

That was a prejudice in his mind.

Prejudice means pre-judging, judging someone negatively before you know them. It means assuming something negative about a group of people; that they are not as good, not as important, not as worthy as others.

When you think of prejudice, what types of prejudice come to mind?

We hear often about racial prejudice – treating someone differently because of their race or skin color.

And we hear about prejudice against national origin or ethnic group – treating someone differently because of the country they were born in or where their parents are from.

Some people have prejudice against people of certain religions, or against people who have a disability, or other “minority” groups.

There are laws that help prevent these types of prejudice, but do these laws prevent everyone from having prejudice?

No, because they don't eliminate the root of the problem, which is in peoples' minds: the negative judgments and assumptions they make about a person based on something that is different about them – their race, color, religion, language, etc.

Why do people have prejudices? Why do they pre-judge others?

Often, it's because they hear a friend, family member or someone on social media talk negatively about people who are different in some way.

For example, we hear someone say that people from a certain place are violent, so we start to believe that people from that place are violent.

Another way that prejudice arises is when we see a person who is different from us in some way behave badly and we generalize - we think that others who are similar to him also behave badly.

For example, we see someone from a certain country stealing something, and we start to think that people from that country steal from others.

Or if we see a certain breed of dog bite someone, we think all dogs of that breed are likely to bite.

Some people have prejudices because they feel badly about themselves in some way and they try to feel better by looking down on or blaming certain other types of people as being the “bad guys” or the cause of problems.

A very common reason why we might have prejudices is that we have a fear of the unknown, we tend to dislike that which is unfamiliar or strange to us, we don't like to approach people who are very different from us.

We think that those who are different might not agree with us, might not understand our feelings, or might not enjoy what we like.

And we tend to be friendly with others who are similar to us – who have the same interests, tastes and background. We know we can get along well with others who understand us, who are just like us.

So we might ignore or avoid people who are different.

Think about who you choose as friends. Are any of your friends of a different race, color, religion, do any speak a different language, or do they have a disability, or does their family not have as much money as yours?

Think about any other kids in your school who are different from you.

How are they different? Are you friendly with them? Why or why not?

If you avoid them, they may feel rejected, unwanted, uncared for.

We cannot have lovingkindness if we have fear, prejudice or dislike of what is different.

Of course, when someone misbehaves, for example being disrespectful or hurtful to others, we should stay away from him.

Someone may behave a little differently because they have a disability.

Instead of staying away, try to learn about their disability and be friendly.

Remember, differences among people make the world interesting and beautiful, just like different types of flowers make a garden interesting and beautiful.



## Chapter 22 - SNAKE TALES (Veluka Jataka, Khandha Vatta Jataka)

There was once a young man who was a Bodhisattva, which means that in a future life would be the Buddha. He decided to give up family and worldly life and become an ascetic, a yogi who lives without many belongings and focuses his life on meditation. After practicing meditation in the Himalaya mountains for several years, he attained wisdom and knowledge to share with others, and after some time he had 500 student yogis living with him.

One evening, a young poisonous viper was slithering along and came to the hut of one of the student yogis.



When the yogi saw the little snake, he thought it looked beautiful and he wanted to take care of it as if it was his own child. So he adopted the viper to be his special pet. He took some bamboo and formed it into a cage to be a home for the snake. He was very kind and gentle to the young reptile, speaking to it in a sweet, loving voice.

The yogis began to call the pet snake “Bamboo” because he lived in a cage made of bamboo. Because the yogi loved his snake as if it was his own child, the other

yogis called him “Bamboo’s Father.”

After some days, the Bodhisattva heard about the student yogi and his pet snake, and requested the student to come and meet with him. The Bodhisattva asked,

“Is it true that you are keeping a viper as a pet?”

The student admitted it was true.

The Bodhisattva said, “A viper can never be trusted. Don’t keep it any longer.”

“But,” said the student, “my viper is as dear to me as a student is to a teacher. I couldn’t live without him.”

“Well then,” responded the Bodhisattva, “know that this very snake will make you lose your life.”



The student heard his master’s warning, but he just couldn’t part with his dear pet snake. Anyway, he couldn’t bear to part with it right away. He loved his pet, and he was sure his snake, which was still quite young and small, would never do anything to harm him.

He fed the little viper small mice and lizards, gave it water and kept it safe, making it happy and comfortable. It

stayed in the bamboo cage, and the student thought that maybe on another day he would let it go. But definitely not yet.

A few days later, all the students went out to gather fruits. They arrived at a spot where many types of fruits grew in plenty, so they decided to stop there and pick fruits to bring back to the monastery.

They enjoyed tasting all the different kinds of mangoes, bananas, papayas, and other sweet fruits. They stayed there for two or three days, climbing trees to get the best fruits and loading up baskets with each kind of fruit. Bamboo’s Father was with them, having left his pet safely in the bamboo cage near his hut while he was gone.

When he returned, he thought his pet may be hungry. He opened the bamboo cage to feed him and stretched out his hand, saying,

“Come, my son, you must be hungry.”



But the viper was angry that he had to wait so long without any food, and bit the student's outstretched hand, killing him on the spot.

Then the viper made his escape into the forest. The other yogis soon found the student's body lying near the bamboo cage. They told the Bodhisattva, who taught

them,

"The stubborn man, like Bamboo's Father, who doesn't follow the kind advice of his friends, will lose everything." This is the end of the first story.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Buddha told another story about love toward snakes after one of his monks had been sitting at his living room door chopping sticks and a snake crawled out of a rotten log and bit his toe, killing him right then and there. While the other monks were talking about it, the Buddha walked in and said,

"Friends, if our brother had practiced kindness toward the four royal races of snakes, that snake would not have bitten him. Wise yogis of long ago, by having kindness toward these snakes, had no more fear of them."

Then the Buddha told the story about another previous life as an ascetic. In that life, when the Bodhisattva left his home as a young man to practice meditation, he met some other ascetics, so he built a monastery near the shore of the Ganga River at the base of the Himalaya mountains. There, he and all the other yogis could meditate peacefully, sheltered from the rain and sun and protected from wild animals. His meditation practice was going well, and after some time, he developed some supernatural powers.

At that time there were many kinds of snakes at the shore of the river. Some of them, such as cobras, vipers, and kraits, were poisonous.



The krait, which likes to live near rivers but occasionally likes to go inside buildings, has the most powerful venom and is the most likely to bite people. It can be over six feet long. It is active at night, and is known for biting people while they are sleeping, or when a person doesn't see it and moves too close to it. Its bite doesn't

hurt much, and often feels like a mosquito or ant bite, so a person often doesn't know he was bitten.



The king cobra, which lives in the jungles all over India, are the world's longest poisonous snake, growing to up to 18 feet long!

When a long one raises its head up, its head can be four feet or more up from the ground and can look an adult person in the eye!



The smaller Indian cobra grows up to five feet long. They are the species that snake charmers use to entertain people.

It can spit venom from its fangs to three feet away, which can cause blindness if the venom gets in the eyes of a person or animal.



Vipers can be very aggressive and can be difficult to see in the weeds and underbrush, so people sometimes step on them and get bitten.

There were other types of poisonous snakes too. The yogis were very mindful and tried to avoid the snakes, but there were so many of them that they were difficult

to avoid. Many of the yogis got bitten, and some of them died from the bite.

Some of the yogis went to the Bodhisattva to discuss this terrible problem of deadly snakes. He called all the yogis to a meeting so all of them would hear his advice. Once they were all assembled at the meeting, he talked about the snakebite incidents and said,



“If you showed lovingkindness to the four royal races of snakes, none of them would bite you.

Therefore, from this time forward, you must practice lovingkindness to all the snakes.”

He told them to how to practice lovingkindness, by opening their hearts with love and chanting these verses:

“May I have lovingkindness to the Virupakkha snakes,  
May I have lovingkindness to the Erapatha snakes,  
May I have lovingkindness to the Chabbyaputta snakes,  
May I have lovingkindness to the Kanhagotama snakes.”

He advised them further, “If you can have lovingkindness toward all snakes, then no snake will bite you or do you any harm.” And he instructed them to chant:

“May I have lovingkindness toward those with no feet,  
May I have lovingkindness toward those with two feet,  
May I have lovingkindness toward those with four feet,  
May I have lovingkindness toward those with many feet,

May those with no feet do me no harm,  
May those with two feet do me no harm,  
May those with four feet do me no harm,  
May those with many feet do me no harm,

All beings, all living creatures,  
May they all be happy and peaceful,  
And may no harm come to them.”

In this way, the Bodhisattva showed how to show lovingkindness to all creatures without any difference of feeling about them, without loving only some and ignoring or hating others. We must have the same lovingkindness for all those with no feet such as worms and snakes; all those with two feet such as kind people, unkind people, birds, bats, and monkeys; all those with four feet such as cows, dogs, rats, turtles, toads and lizards; and all those with many feet such as centipedes, insects, spiders, scorpions and crabs.

Although there was no living Buddha on the earth at that time, he taught them about a Buddha that lived before. He said, “The Buddha’s power has no limit, the power of his teachings (the Dharma) has no limit, and the power of his followers (the Sangha) have no limit. Remember this infinite power of the Three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. On the other hand, all creatures that creep on the Earth - snakes, scorpions, centipedes, spiders, lizards and mice - have limited power, only a small amount of power.”

He explained, “The greed and hatred in these creatures are the qualities that limit their power. Let us be protected night and day against these limited beings by the power of the Three Jewels, which have ultimate power with no limit. Remember the value of the Three Jewels.”

Then he advised them to chant another verse:

“Now I am guarded and safe, with a wall of protection around me;  
Now let all creatures leave me in peace.  
I honor the Buddha,  
and all the seven Buddhas who lived before.”

The yogis kept in mind the Bodhisattva’s advice, developed their lovingkindness, and remembered the virtues and power of the Buddha. And then all the snakes left the area, leaving the yogis in peace.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What did the Bodhisattva tell Bamboo’s Father about the viper? (it can’t be trusted and it will cause him to lose his life)
2. After the Bodhisattva said that, why didn’t Bamboo’s Father let the snake go right away? (he loved the snake and didn’t think it would harm him)
3. What did the Bodhisattva tell the ascetics to do to avoid being bitten by snakes? (practice lovingkindness toward all snakes)
4. To which other creatures did the Bodhisattva tell them to practice lovingkindness? (all living creatures)
5. What did he teach about how much power the Buddha has (and the Three Jewels)? (there is no limit to his power)
6. What did he teach about how much power creatures such as snakes, scorpions and spiders have? (it is limited)

#### DHARMA DISCUSSION – Fear and Love:

Why wasn’t Bamboo’s Father afraid of being bitten by his snake?

He thought he was so kind and loving to his pet that it wouldn't harm him. Do you think that if you are kind and loving to someone, he will never harm you?

No. We all learn sooner or later that being kind to someone doesn't mean they always will be nice to us in return.

They might even hurt us very badly.

Similarly, Bamboo's Father was so kind to his pet, but it bit him.

So, why would the Bodhisattva teach that practicing lovingkindness toward snakes will prevent them from biting us?

To answer that, think about the way Bamboo's Father showed lovingkindness toward his pet. How did he do that?

By feeding it and keeping it in a cage.

He had love for his pet only. And he kept his pet for himself to enjoy.

That is called love *with attachment*.

When we love someone with attachment, it means we are attached to what we can get from that love. We are attached to him because he says and does things that give us happiness, he entertains us, he makes us feel special, appreciated and important.

Is that the kind of lovingkindness that the Bodhisattva taught us to practice?

No. What he taught was lovingkindness *without* attachment.

That means we love others without expecting love or anything in return.

We love other beings only for their well-being, even if we get no benefit, no special attention, nothing in return.

And he taught us to have that lovingkindness toward all, without judging, without thinking about who deserves it, who we prefer, or who we like best.

How can we have lovingkindness toward all beings, even those that are awful?

The Bodhisattva specifically mentioned creatures that we might think are awful: snakes, scorpions, and spiders.

It's difficult to love them. Why? Because they may harm us. We're afraid of them.

When we are full of fear, can we be full of love? Not really.

When we have fear, it's difficult to have love.

But we can train ourselves to love them. How?

By reciting the verses in the story or another lovingkindness prayer, meditating on lovingkindness to all beings, and just remembering to have lovingkindness whenever we start to think some creature is awful.



Then our love overcomes our fear, so our fear fades away, like when there is light, darkness fades away.

But that doesn't mean we shouldn't take precautions and protect ourselves! We can have lovingkindness from a distance - not touch it or get close to it. For example, if we train ourselves to love a spider, scorpion, or snake, we may start to notice how interesting or even how cute it looks. And we can remember that it bites not because it's evil but because it feels threatened or afraid.

What about lovingkindness toward people - how can we have lovingkindness toward people who are awful – who are cruel, bullies, destructive or full of hate?

We can remember that bad behavior and negative emotions means that they are hurting inside and they will suffer from the results of their karmas. In some situations, we can be friendly and kind to them, setting a good example.

But it's usually best to try to stay away from them.

In the first story, the Bodhisattva specifically told the student to stay away from the dangerous creature, not to keep the snake.

In the second story, he said to have lovingkindness, but from a distance. He didn't advise getting near the snakes.

He knew that practicing lovingkindness toward all beings creates a lot of merit, and that merit is a protection from harm.

And indeed, what happened when the yogis practiced lovingkindness?

The snakes left the area, so the yogis were no longer harmed by snakes.

How can we have lovingkindness from a distance toward people with terrible behavior?

We can do prayers, chanting, and meditation on lovingkindness, but how can we actually have lovingkindness toward those people?

Imagine a bunch of puppies, and some of the puppies are cuddly and cute. But one growls and barks loudly at you, and another one nips your hand when you reach to pet him.

You love them all, and you don't hate any of them just because they do something offensive.

They are ignorant of the rules of being a good pet; they need a peaceful environment, training, and discipline; they need to learn the rules.

You hope that they will become well behaved after they learn.

Similarly, people who misbehave are ignorant of the rules of Dharma.

Like puppies, what do they need?

They need a peaceful environment and they need to learn the rules, even if they already are adults.

We hope that they learn the rules of Dharma so they lose their ignorance, their negative emotions, and awaken themselves to their real nature, which is kind and loving.

So, we can practice lovingkindness toward them by wishing that they be happy, peaceful and quickly learn how to be a good person.

Then they would stop harming others.

When we practice like that, then we reduce our own negative emotions of fear, anger and hatred toward them.

## Chapter 23 - DRUM BEAT (Bherivada Jataka)

Once there was a man who was a drummer in a small village. He heard that soon there would be a big festival in the city, and he wanted to play his drum at the festival, hoping he could make some money. He decided to go to the festival with his son, who was learning to play the drum, so they could play their drums together.



They got up early in the morning, and walked for hours on a long road through a forest, until finally they arrived in the city.



There was so much to see at the festival! There was a big crowd of people from all the surrounding villages dressed in colorful clothes. People were selling all kinds of foods and sweets. There were small and large groups of talented drummers and other musicians.



The father and son joined with some other men and played their drums.

The people enjoyed the father and son playing their drums. Some even danced to their drumming. Many people gave them money in appreciation.

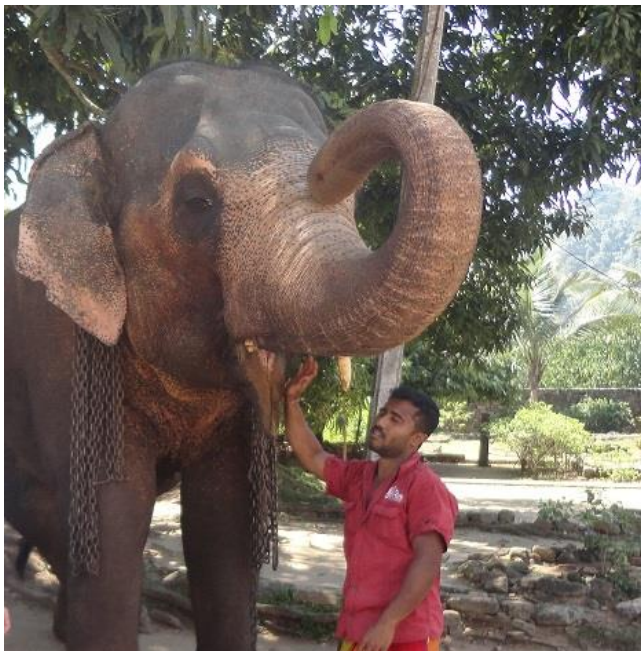
After they made a lot of money, the father said,

“Let’s look around the festival for little while, and then we must walk home soon so we won’t have to walk in the dark. But don’t wander away! Stay near me and don’t lose sight of me. It’s easy to get lost here with all these people. But if you do get lost, meet me where we were playing the drums.”



The son agreed, and they walked around together. They saw a man performing with snakes. They also saw men performing stunts on horses. That was exciting!

While his father was talking to some men, the boy saw an elephant. He had never seen an elephant before! He really wanted to go see it. It was boring just standing around with the men, so he started walking toward the elephant, while carefully keeping his father in sight.



He got close enough to see the elephant clearly. But then, its owner started walking away with the elephant.

The boy wanted to watch the elephant - it was so interesting! He slowly walked along with the elephant. Soon he couldn't see his father anymore, but he thought, “I know where he is, I’ll find him again.”

He fed the elephant a banana. It was thrilling when the elephant raised his trunk and trumpeted! He wanted to watch the elephant's every move.

After a while the elephant's owner led it outside the city to go back home. The boy raced back to where he last saw his father.

But his father wasn't there. He went to where they had been playing drums earlier, and the father wasn't there either. He started to feel bad that he had wandered away, disobeying his father. Soon he began to panic, worrying that he had made his father upset. Where was he? He frantically walked around looking everywhere. He worried that it would be getting dark soon and they had a long walk home. Had his father started walking home already? The boy wondered whether he should start walking down the road. His anxiety grew more and more by the minute. His mouth dry with fear and his heart thumping wildly in his chest, he walked all around the festival area searching and searching.

Finally, he found his father. With a very worried look on his face, his father said,



“Son, why did you walk away? I waited for you for a long time where we had played the drums and you didn't meet me there.”

The boy wanted to explain, “I saw an elephant and I wanted to see him up close, and I even got to feed him.”

But he didn't want to just give excuses. He had made his father worried and upset. He felt ashamed that he didn't follow his father's directions. He

should have at least told his father that he wanted to see the elephant. So he just said humbly,

“I’m sorry, Dad.”

The father said, “It’s past time to start walking back home. It’s getting late, and soon it will be getting dark.”

They had to walk a long way back through the forest. The father warned,

“Watch out for robbers. They could be hiding behind the bushes and suddenly run out and catch us and steal all our money.”

The son was thinking, “Oh Dad, you’re always worried.” But he didn’t want to say anything disrespectful. The father said,

“Many people have been robbed when they walk down this road.”

The son didn’t want to think about that. He started playing his drum. He had learned new rhythms to play on the drum, and he wanted to play them faster. He loved his new talent, and it was so much fun to play fast and loud!

His father said, “Son. Son! Calm down. Don’t beat the drum so fast and loud.”



The son said, “But why? I want to play it like this.”

He felt brave with his wild drum playing. He thought that he could protect himself and his father from the robbers better if he beat loudly on his drum.

The father said, “Don’t do it like that. Just beat the drum here and there, occasionally, as if some great king were passing by. Then the robbers will think we are a big group protecting a king and they won’t attack us.”

The son said, “But it’s boring to play slowly.”

His father was disappointed hearing his son disrespecting his advice. So he was silent. The son slowed down his drum playing for a little while, and then started playing faster and faster.

He thought, “Robbers would be more afraid of a powerful confident drummer, so I’ll beat my drum really loud and fast so they’ll stay away.” Ignoring his father’s advice, he beat the drum furiously, imagining anyone on the path will be scared away by the loud pounding on the drum.

Far up the road, a gang of robbers was waiting. They heard the pounding of a drum coming down the road. They thought,

“Here comes another big group of people with drums – we better hide and leave them alone.”

But as the drumming came closer, the robbers listened to the fast, loud beat. One of them said,



“This sounds like a person who is scared, like a frightened little dog barks loud and fast when he is scared.”

Another robber agreed and said,

“With such a frightened drummer – that’s no king or big group coming. Let’s take a look.”

Staying out of sight, the robbers went down the road closer to the sound and hid behind some trees and brush. Peeking out from behind the trees, they saw the father and son with their drums alone on the road. The robbers rushed out from behind the trees and pushed the father down on the ground. They hit him and grabbed his bag, robbing him of all the money he had earned at the festival.

After they ran away, the father said, "With your constant drumming you have lost all our hard-earned money! You shouldn't overdo things. By drumming too much, we lost what our drumming had earned."

He and his son trudged home, feeling very disappointed.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What did the boy do that was disobedient to his father's instructions while they were at the festival? (he wandered away from his father)
2. What distracted him that tempted him to wander away? (the elephant)
3. When they were walking home, how did the boy disobey his father? (he played the drum loud and fast)
4. How did the father instruct him he should play it to prevent robbers from attacking? (slow, like when a king is coming)
5. How did the son think the drums should be played to scare off the robbers? (loud and fast)
6. Why didn't the son just follow his father's advice? (he enjoyed drumming loud and fast, and thought that was the best way to scare away the robbers)

#### DHARMA DISCUSSION - Following Instructions and Advice:

Did the son in the story seem to be a generally a disobedient, disrespectful person? No, he seemed to care about how his father might feel, and he worried about upsetting or disrespecting his father.



But he did end up disobeying his father – his father told him to stay close to and keep him in sight, and not to wander away, and he didn't follow those instructions.

Why did he disobey? Because of the elephant – it was so interesting that he either forgot what his father had said, or maybe he had made excuses to himself, like “I'll watch it for only a moment,” “I'll follow it only for a little while,” or “My father is busy talking and won't go anywhere.”

And he disobeyed his father's instructions about how to play the drum while they were walking home.

Why did that happen? Did he just not care about what his father said? No, he really loved playing what he learned, and he thought playing fast and loud made him feel brave and confident.

And he thought he knew better than his father what would scare away robbers.

Has it ever happened to you, that you wandered away from your parents? Did you ever intend to do what a parent told you to do, but you got distracted and forgot?

Did you ever disobey your parent or teacher, while you thought of some excuse like “I'll do it later,” or “my parents won't notice” or “I'll just do this for a little while longer”?

Did you get in trouble or did your parent get upset?

Sometimes we are enjoying something and we think we can just follow directions later.

But like we learned in the story, that can lead to trouble.

We may cause big problems for ourselves and others when we forget to follow directions or when we think we'll just do it later.

How can we avoid forgetting?

By practicing mindfulness more often, we become more aware of what we are doing and thinking, and of what we are supposed to be doing.

Sometimes we're given instructions and we don't *want* to follow them,

We have our own idea that we think is better.

Have you ever ignored your parent's advice, thinking that you know better than your parent, like the boy in the story?

Sometimes, advice to do something differently can seem like criticism.

We might feel proud of the way we do it, or we feel like we are very talented or knowledgeable about it and we don't like to hear criticism.

How do you feel when someone tells you “Don’t do it like that, do it like this”?

Maybe it depends on who is telling you.

How would you feel if a teacher tells you? Or a parent?

Would you feel differently if a friend, or sister or brother tells you instead of a teacher or parent?

Whether or not we have talent or expertise, we all like to be right, we like to show others that we know what we’re doing.

So it’s not pleasant to hear criticism, to hear that we are doing something all wrong.

But if we don’t listen to advice or criticism, sooner or later we end up with problems or embarrassment from not doing something correctly.

What if you are sure you know how to do something but someone tells you to do it differently. How would you respond?

Should you say “I know how to do it” and ignore their advice?

At least you should listen respectfully. Be open to it, and appreciate it, even if it seems like criticism.

You might learn something very valuable!

You may learn something new, or a different perspective.

The other person might know better than you do, or may show you another way to do something, or how to avoid problems or mistakes.

Then maybe you can share your ideas.

Exchanging ideas is much more valuable than insisting on your own idea.

Collaborating and exchanging information is often better than competing, trying to prove you know better.

So we should be grateful to the person who gives us advice or constructive criticism, even if we didn’t want it.

How would you respond to these situations?

1. Your friend looks at your homework and says that you did not follow the directions, and that you are going to get a bad grade on it.
  - a. You tell your friend she didn’t understand the directions.
  - b. You look at the directions again and make sure the homework is done correctly.
  - c. You tell her you already read the directions and you did it correctly.
  - d. You look at the directions again, make sure the homework is done correctly, and thank your friend.

2. Your mother says you are not dressed warmly enough, that it will be colder outside later.
  - a. You put on a jacket.
  - b. You tell her that you will be warm enough.
  - c. You tell her, "you always say that."
  - d. You thank her and put on a jacket.
  
3. Your art teacher advises you to put more details on your art project.
  - a. You say "But this is the way I want do it."
  - b. You say "But no one else put details on theirs."
  - c. You ask her what details to put in, and follow her advice.
  - d. You start a new art project.
  
4. A friend says that you didn't explain clearly enough.
  - a. You explain with more detail.
  - b. You ask, "what do you mean?"
  - c. You tell him he didn't listen carefully.
  - d. You tell your friend to listen, and then you repeat what you said before.
  
5. An older teammate says you are not performing well for the team.
  - a. You say, "I'll try harder next time."
  - b. You ask "What can I do to improve?" and then follow his advice.
  - c. You point out the mistakes of other teammates.
  - d. You give an excuse why your performance was not so good.

Suggested answers: 1 d , 2 d , 3 c , 4 a , 5 b