

Lesson 11 – SHOW GRATITUDE – Deciding to Teach

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

people with bad qualities, people who were easy to teach and people who were hard to teach.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

They greeted him, calling him “friend Gautama.”

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

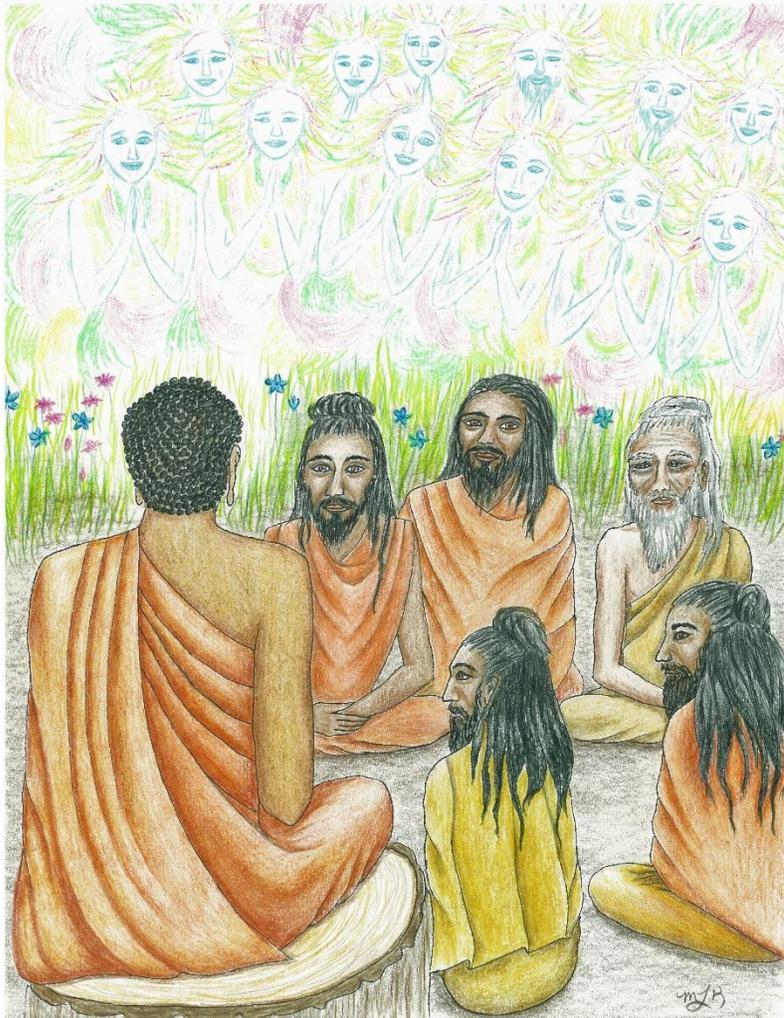
One of the five ascetics said, “Friend Gautama, even with the extremely difficult ascetic practices you did, you didn’t go beyond the ordinary human level. Since you are now living in comfort and luxury and have given up the effort to become enlightened, how can you have reached any goal?”

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

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

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

The five ascetics replied, “No, Lord.”



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

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

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

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

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

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

“Kondañña knows, Kondañña knows!”

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

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

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

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

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

Questions:

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

What the Buddha said:

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

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

Dhammapada 177 (13:11)

Dharma discussion: Show Gratitude:

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

Full enlightenment.

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

He wanted to share it with others.

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

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

Can you remember why you wanted to share?

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

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

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

To avoid that, and can share with kindness, so others enjoy what we're sharing.

How can we do that?

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

What is gratitude?

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

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

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

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

Or, we can do something kind for other people.

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

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

That's called “paying it forward.”

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

The Buddha shared while feeling gratitude.

He taught Dharma to Mucalinda, the royal naga, in gratitude for protecting him from the storm.

And he wanted to share the Dharma in gratitude to his teachers and to the five ascetics in return for helping him before.

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

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

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

Upaka walked away, and the ascetics accused the Buddha of living in luxury.

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

Or they may feel jealous or annoyed.

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

How did the five ascetics show their gratitude to the Buddha for teaching them the Dharma? They didn't own anything, so what did they give him?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Activity:

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

