

## **Lesson 10 – SHOW GRATITUDE**

*Opening chants, meditation, and review of last lesson.*

*Question to think about before the story:* What is the best way to **show** your **gratitude**?

### **Story: Deciding to Teach**

After the merchants Tapassa and Bhalluka became his first followers, the Buddha left the Rajayatana Tree and went back to the Ajapala Banyan Tree and sat under it. The Buddha thought, “The Dharma that I have discovered is hard to understand; it is for the wise to experience. But people have so many desires and attachments they want to enjoy, that they cannot understand the Dharma. If I taught the Dharma, others would not understand me, and I would get 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 for the wisest and noblest beings, was a brahma named Sahampati who in a past life was a monk ordained by a past Buddha, the Buddha Kassapa. Knowing the Buddha’s thoughts, Brahma Sahampati thought, “The world will be lost, totally lost, if the Perfect Fully Enlightened One does not teach the Dharma.” He 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 [only a little ignorance] who are wasting by not hearing the Dharma. Some of them will get final knowledge of the Dharma. Let them hear the Dharma you have found. O all-seeing Wise One, see the humans who are suffering. Arise, O Victorious Hero, Bringer of Knowledge, and wander in the world. Teach the Dharma, for some, O Blessed One, will understand.”

The Buddha felt compassion for all of the suffering beings in the world, and with his divine eye he could see beings who had very little ignorance and those with a lot of ignorance, those who were pure and those who were impure, those who were easy to teach and those who were difficult to teach, just like there are lotuses growing under the water, other lotuses that grow up onto the surface of the water, and other lotuses that grow up out of the water and bloom without getting wet. He decided to teach the Dharma. So, Brahma Sahampati was happy, bowed and vanished back to the Brahma world.

The Buddha thought, “Who should I teach first? Who will soon understand the Dharma? My teacher Alara Kalama is wise - he would understand it.” But some devas told Buddha that he had died seven days ago. Buddha thought about teaching his other teacher Uddaka Ramaputta, but the devas said that he had died just last night. Then the Buddha thought about the five ascetics who were very helpful to him for the six years in the forest, and with his divine eye, he could see that they were in the Deer Park near Varanasi, at a place now known as Bodhagaya. So, he started traveling to the Deer Park, which is a holy place in India where previous Buddhas had taught the Dharma.

On his way, a monk called Upaka saw him on the road and said “You look so serene, friend, and your skin is clear and bright. Who is your teacher? Whose Dharma do you practice?” The Buddha answered, “I have mastered all, I know all; purified, I have destroyed craving by my own wisdom. I have no teacher, there is no one like me in the world. I alone am enlightened with all craving destroyed. I go now to set the Wheel of Dharma in motion, in a blindfolded world.” The monk Upaka then said “May it be so, friend,” and went on his way.

When he arrived at the Deer Park, the five ascetics saw the Buddha coming, and agreed, “Here comes the monk Gautama who wanted luxuries and gave up the struggle. We shouldn’t bow to him or stand up and receive his bowl and outer robe, but we can prepare a seat for him.” But as soon as the Buddha came close, they couldn’t keep their agreement; they took his bowl and when he sat down, they washed his feet. They greeted him, calling him “friend Gautama,” but he replied, “Don’t address the Perfect One by his name and as ‘friend’: the Perfect One is fully enlightened. Listen, monks, I shall teach you, and if you practice the teachings, you will realize yourselves directly the goal of the holy life that monks try to reach.” The five ascetics said, “Friend Gautama, your difficult ascetic practices did not take you to the goal, and now that you have given up and gone into the luxurious life, how can you have reached any goal?” The Buddha said, “The Perfect One has not given up and fallen into the life of luxury, but is fully enlightened. Monks, have you ever heard me speak like this before?” The five ascetics replied, “No, Lord.” Finally the Buddha convinced them, and they listened.

And then the Buddha taught them the first Dharma discourse, which set the Wheel of Dharma in motion. He taught them that monks should avoid the two extremes of luxury and self-torture, both of which are harmful and not noble. The Middle Way avoids these two extremes, and gives knowledge, peace, enlightenment and Nirvana. He taught them what he discovered when he became enlightened: the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. He taught the First Noble Truth (dukkha), that all of these are suffering: birth, ageing, sickness, death, pain, being with what is disliked, being separated from what is loved, not getting what you want. He taught the Second Noble Truth (samudaya), that the cause of suffering is craving, wanting, enjoying things and wanting more. He taught the Third Noble Truth (nirodha), the end of suffering happens when wanting and craving (tanha) is faded away, given up, let go and stopped. If you stop wanting, then you stop the agony of not getting what you want. He taught the Fourth Noble Truth (marga), that the way to the end of suffering is the Eightfold Path: right view, right thought, 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 experience them.

While the Buddha was giving this teaching, one of the five ascetics, Venerable Kondañña, fully understood the Dharma that everything that arises must end. The devas and brahmas in all the heaven-worlds were extremely happy that the

Buddha had begun teaching Dharma, that is, he set the Wheel of Dharma rolling, which cannot be stopped by anyone. Their happiness made earthquakes and a great light appear. The Buddha exclaimed, “Kondañña knows, Kondañña knows!” and 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 become ordained as a monk by you.” The Buddha said, “Come, bhikkshu.” The word “bhikkshu” means monk. The Buddha said, “The Dharma is well taught. Live the holy life for the complete end of suffering.” And that was the way Kondañña became the first Buddhist monk.

After the Buddha taught more Dharma, the other four fully understood that everything that arises must end, and they asked to become monks, and the Buddha ordained them also. The five new monks were very happy, and thrilled to hear him teach. Listening to his teachings, all of their remaining impurities vanished, they had no more desires or craving (tanha), so they became Arahants, humans who are fully enlightened and will never take another birth.

*Questions after the story:*

1. Why did the Buddha at first not want to teach the Dharma?
2. When Brahma Sahampati knew the Buddha’s thoughts, what did he say to the Buddha?
3. What did the Buddha see with his divine eye?
4. Who did the Buddha want to teach first?
5. Why did the monk Upaka talk to the Buddha?
6. What happened when the Buddha first saw the five ascetics?
7. What did the Buddha teach them?
8. Who was the first Buddhist monk?
9. What does “Arahant” mean?

*Quotation of Buddha about the moral of the story:*

**“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)

*Application of the moral(s) in the story to our daily lives:*

In the last lesson, we talked about gratitude. How did the Buddha show his gratitude? He stood looking at the Bodhi Tree without moving his eyes for a week, meditating on it with gratitude, and he taught some Dharma to Mucalinda in gratitude for protecting him from the storm. In today’s lesson, we heard that Buddha wished to teach the Dharma that he discovered to his teachers and the five ascetics. He thought that they were wise and therefore may be able to understand the Dharma. Do you think there was any other reason? The Buddha remembered how the five ascetics had helped him for the six years in the forest. Maybe he was feeling gratitude for their help, and gratitude to his former teachers for teaching him and letting him stay at their monasteries. The Buddha set an example of not just feeling gratitude, but *showing* our gratitude to those who help us. He gave to Mucalinda and the five ascetics the most valuable thing

that he could give them and that they could appreciate. What was that? The Dharma. The five ascetics did not own anything, and they were so happy and grateful for the Buddha's teachings, so in gratitude, what did they give him? They gave him the most valuable thing that they could give and that the Buddha could appreciate: sharing the Dharma in the best way they could, by dedicating their life as Buddhist monks.

What is the best way to show your gratitude? Sometimes we say "thank you," or we give a gift, a thank-you card, a hug or a smile when we are thankful for something. But what about if we get something very valuable, are those enough? Can we show our gratitude in a bigger way than that? When adults are thankful for their job, they work very hard for their boss. When they hear a monk teach the Dharma very well, because of their gratitude, they serve the temple in many ways, like bringing food, helping the monks, cleaning the temple, and giving donations. What very valuable things are you grateful for? Your parents' hard work in taking care of you, and your teachers' hard work preparing the class for you - your teachers at school, music teachers, dance teachers, scout masters. You can be thankful to your parents that you are happy, healthy and intelligent, and to your teachers that you are gaining knowledge and skill. What can you give them to show your gratitude? They appreciate when you learn well from them, when you show interest in what they teach, when you practice what they teach, and when you are respectful, obedient, patient, polite, and helpful. So, you can give them your attention, respect, obedience, help, and best efforts in practicing what they teach.

What else do you have that is very valuable that you can be grateful for? The Dharma! How can we show gratitude for having such a precious and special teaching? By *practicing* the Dharma – for example, by showing metta (loving-kindness) to all beings, by being kind to them and helping them however we can. That means we have to *remember* to be helpful, be *aware* of how we can help, and then offer help. Also, we can brighten someone's day by just smiling! People love to see a child's smile. Sometimes people are unhappy, lonely or stressed out, and when they see you smile, it makes them feel appreciated. They remember it and feel happier. Feeling thankful for our good fortune, we can share our happiness, making others happier, with just a smile or kind words or help. It also makes *us* happy knowing that we are giving to others.

*Activity to reinforce the lesson:*

Each student traces or rubs the side of a crayon around a cardboard cut-out of the Buddhist Wheel on poster paper, then labels one element of the Eight-Fold Path (i.e., "Right View") on each spoke of the Wheel. Then students decorate it, and display it at home where the family can see it. For example, they can hang it on the refrigerator or frame it and hang it on the wall. By bringing the Dharma Wheel home and displaying it, students show their gratitude to family members by giving them a reminder of the valuable Dharma.

*Closing chant:* Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā      May all beings have happy minds!